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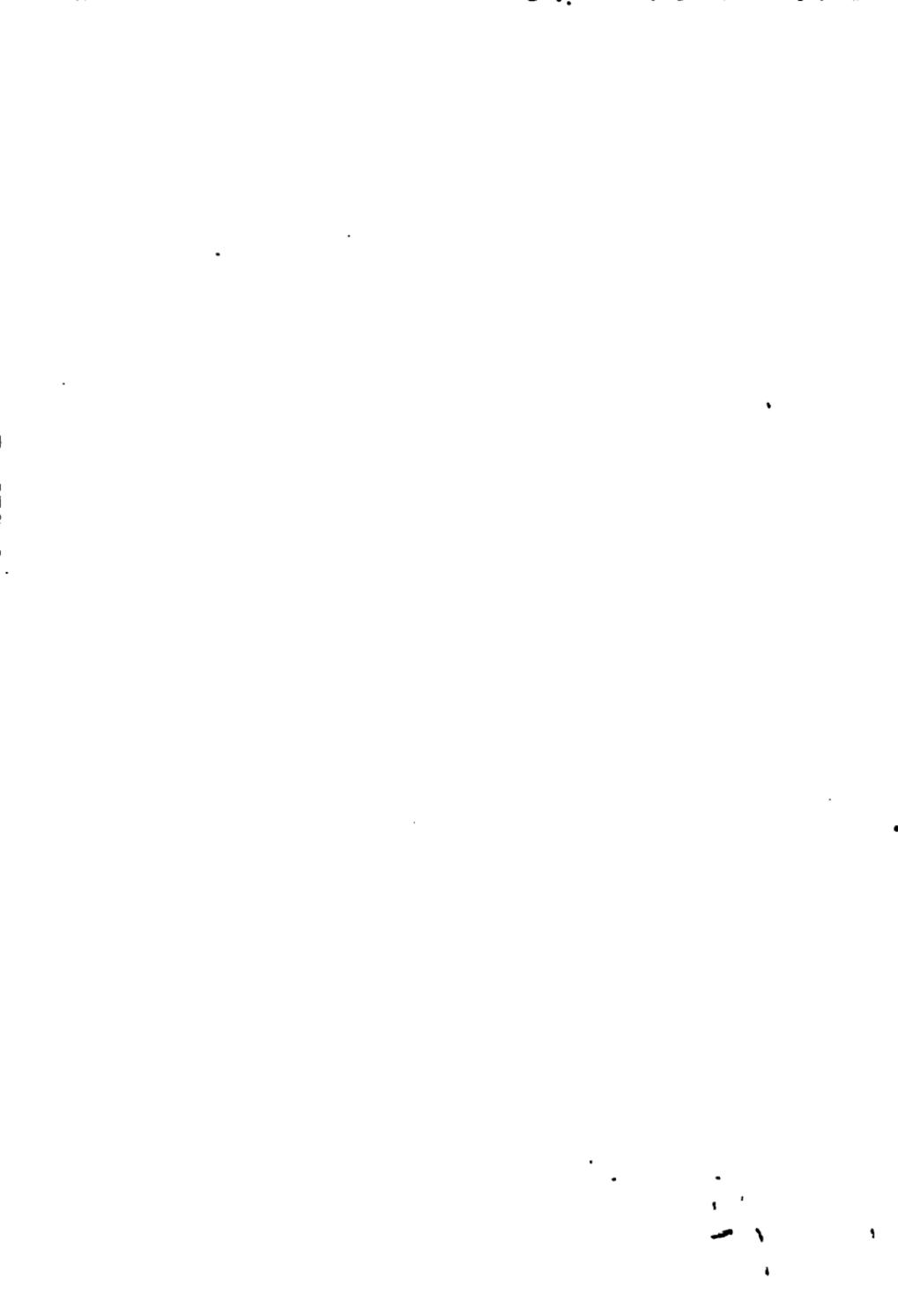
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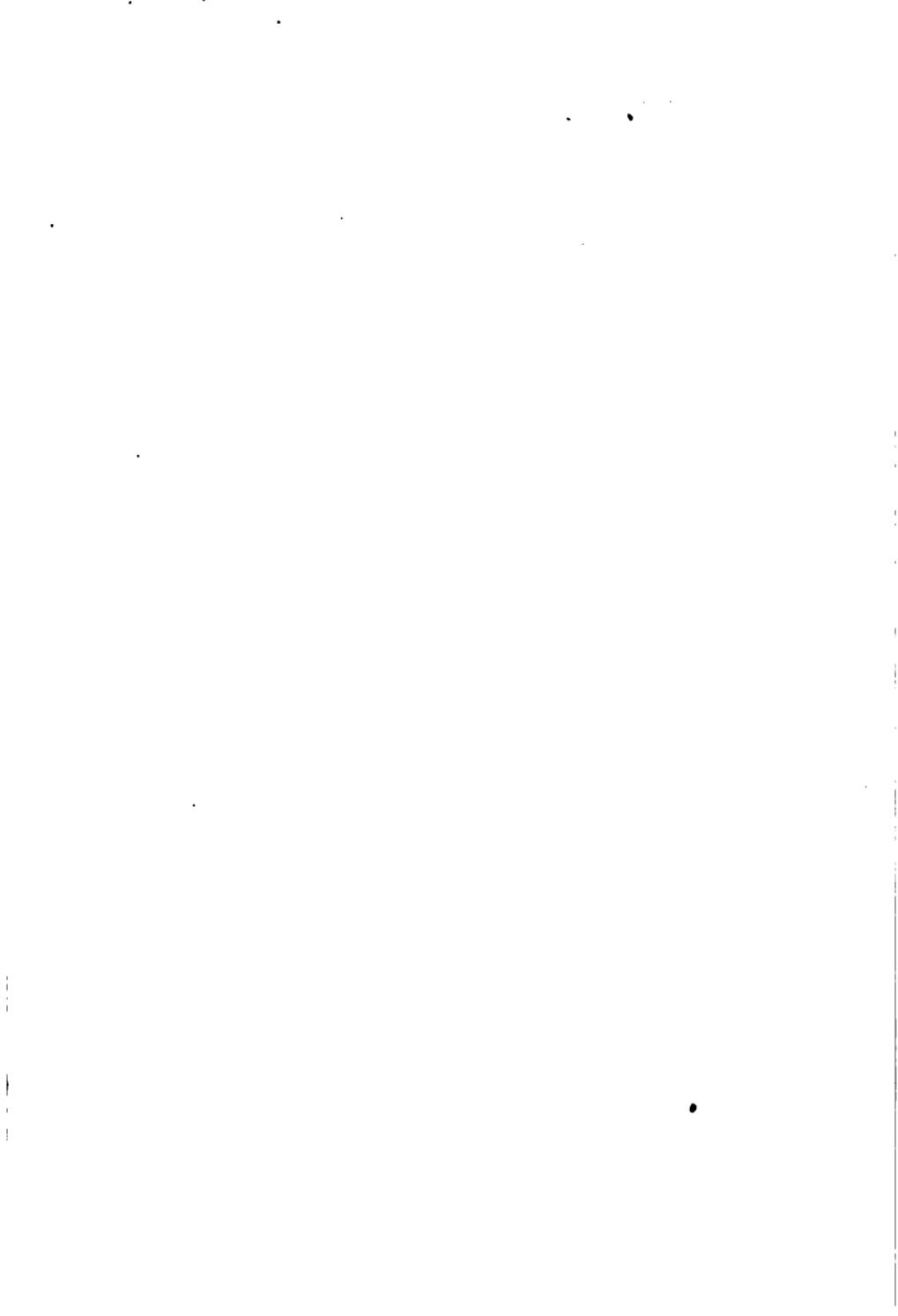
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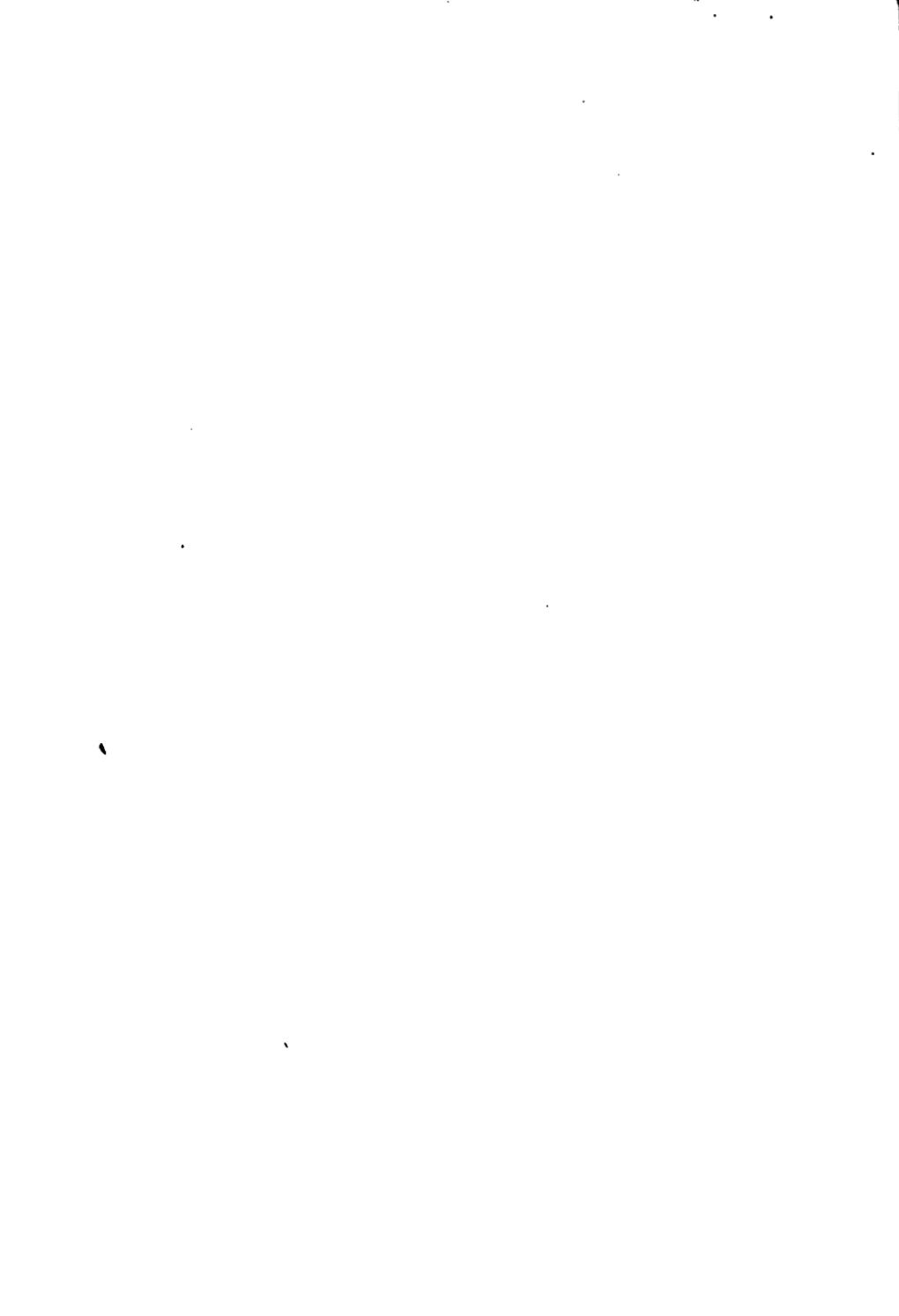
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HEPPLESTALL'S

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Three Lancashire Plays
(The Game, The Northerners, Zack)
Hobson's Choice
Garside's Career
Dealing in Futures
Graft
The Odd Man Out

One Act Plays

Lonesome-Like
The Price of Coal
Maid of France
The Doorway
Spring in Bloomsbury
The Oak Settle

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HEPPLESTALL'S

By
HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

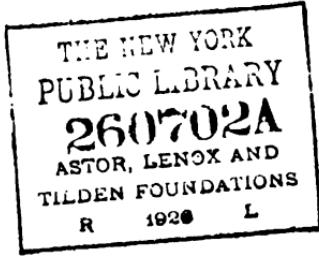


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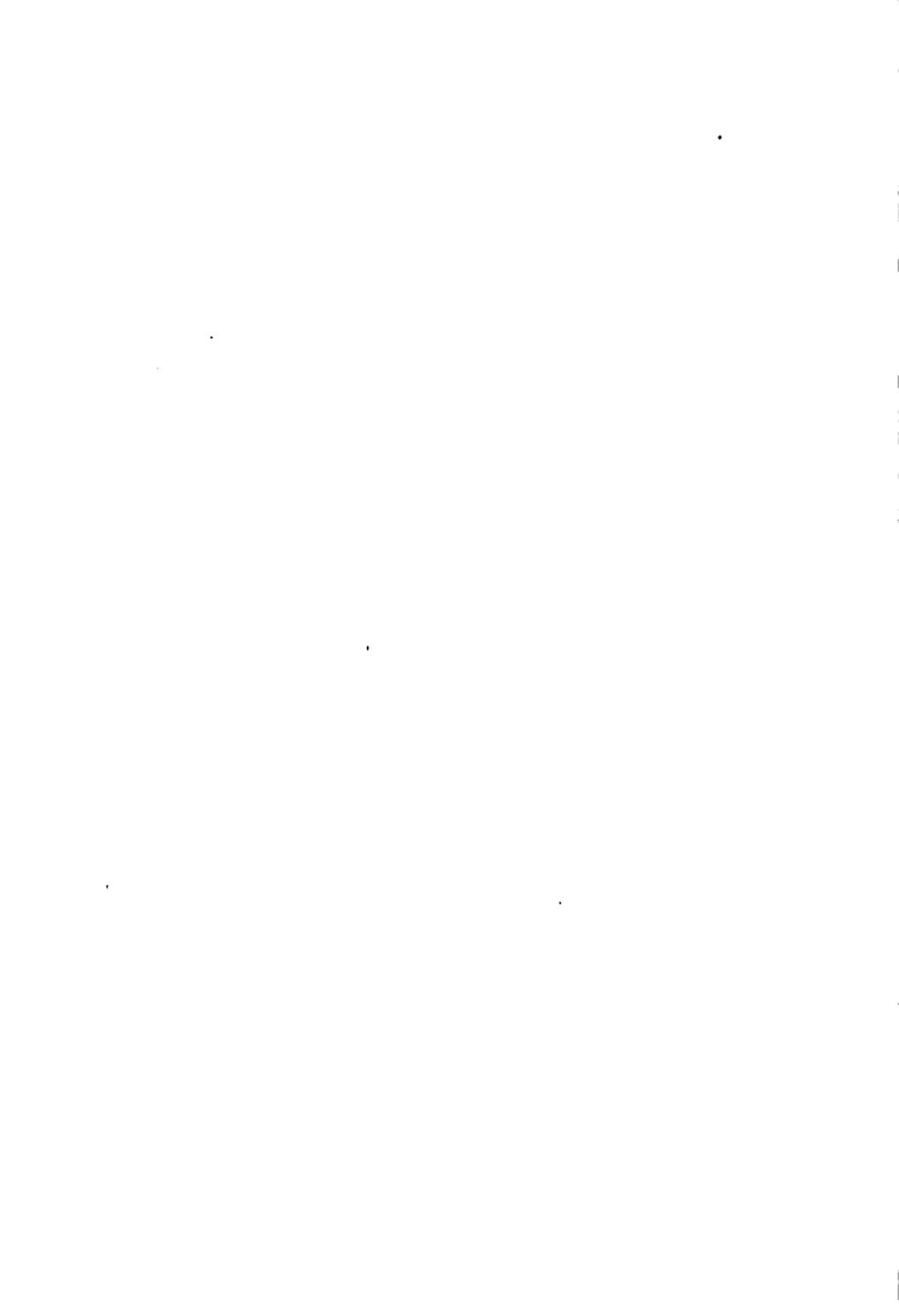
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FOREWORD

RUMMAGING at a bargain-counter, I came across an object which puzzled me, and, turning to the shopman, I asked him what it was. He took it up contemptuously. "That," he said. "Dear me, I thought I'd put it in the dust-bin. It's fit for nothing but destruction." "And you call it?" I persisted. "I call it by its name," he said. "It's an outworn passion, and a pretty frayed one too. Look at that!"

I watched him pull gently at the passion and it came apart like mildewed fabric. "There's no interest in that," he said. "That never led to a murder or a divorce, a feeble fellow like that. If it ever got as far as the First Offenders' Court, I shall be surprised."

"Yet it looks old," I said. "In its youth, perhaps—"

He examined it more closely. "I don't think it's a love passion at all," he said, shaking his head. "My suppliers are getting very careless."

"You wouldn't care to give me their address?" I coaxed.

He threw the passion down angrily. "This is a shop," he said. "I'm here to sell, not to make presents of my trade secrets."

I apologized. "Of course," I said, "I will always deal through you. And as to this passion, what is the price of that?"

"I'm an honest man and to tell you the truth I'd rather put that in the dust-bin than sell it. It goes against

FOREWORD

the grain to be trading in goods that I know won't satisfy."

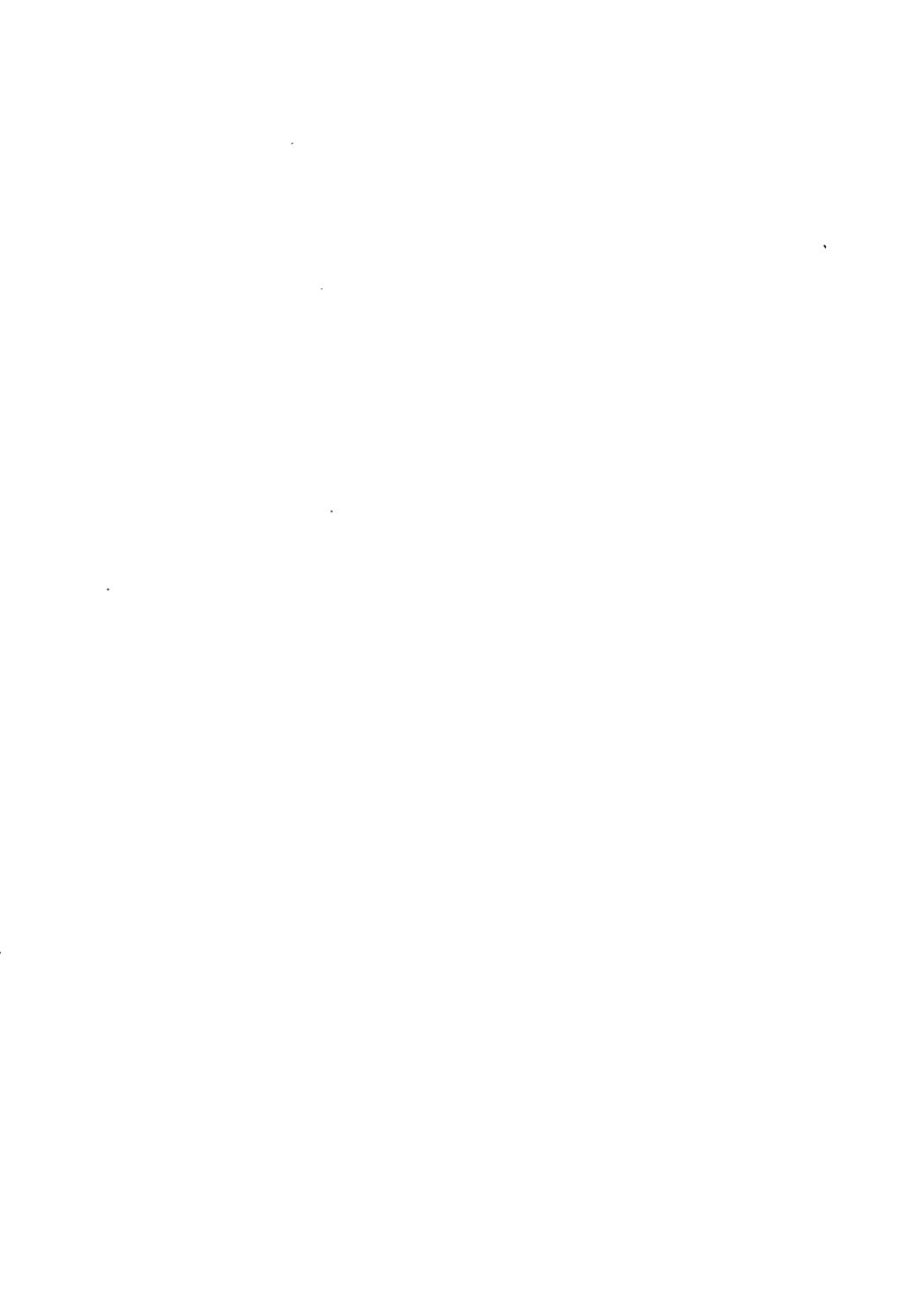
I said things such as that I would take the risk, that I would not hold him responsible for any disappointment the passion might cause me and I ended by offering him sixpence. So taken was he by the generosity of this offer that he not only accepted it, but insisted on my taking, as discount, a piece of newspaper which, he said, would serve very well to wrap round the passion, pointing out, truthfully, that it was a cleanish piece of paper, neither stained by nor stinking of fried fish.

So we struck that bargain, and leaving the shop, which I have never found again, I carried the passion home and unwrapped it from the paper and put it on the table in my study. After a time, when it was accustomed to its new surroundings, it showed unmistakably that it wished to be friendly with me. At its age, I gathered, and in its outworn condition, it thought fit to be grateful to me for having purchased it at so great a price. The shopman was right; it was not a love passion, it was a hate passion, but superannuated now, and if I cared to watch it carefully it promised that I should see from the first all that happened: how this hate which was so very strong a hundred years ago had died and was now turned to such corruption and kindness that, before it fell utterly to pieces, it was to show me its career. To me it seems that the story of this hate falls, like the hymns, into two parts, ancient and modern, and I think it properest to begin by telling you the ancient part first. Hates that are to live a hundred years are not born in a day, so I shall first tell you how Reuben Hepplestall turned from petty squire to cotton manufacturing and you will see later for yourselves why this hate began.

HEPPLESTALL'S



PART I



HEPPLESTALL'S

CHAPTER I

REUBEN'S SEAL

EVEN to-day a man may be a Jacobite if he likes to be a Jacobite just as he may read the *Morning Post*, and in the day when Reuben Hepplestall was young there was a variety of reasons for being Jacobite, though most of them were romantic and sentimental rather than practical or good sense, and Hepplestall's reason was rank absurdity because it was absurdity unredeemed by conviction. He was Jacobite because Sir Harry Whitworth was Hanoverian, from hatred of Sir Harry, not from love of the Stuarts; but Hepplestall was young and as a general principle perversity in youth is better than perversity in age, leaving the longer time for correction.

Certainly, Hepplestall's was a risky game, which may have had attractiveness for him. He was strong, even in perversity, and having set his hand to the plow, did not rest until he found himself accepted as a power in the inner councils of the local Jacobites; but there was something nourishing to his self-importance in this furtive prominence and he savored the hazards of it not only because it marked to himself his difference from the hard drinking sportsmen of Sir Harry's set, but as a mental exercise. He took a gambler's risk in a gambling age, backing his vigilance against all comers, feeling that to touch the fringe of intrigue lifted him above a society

which exercised its gullet more than its wits. His secret, especially a dangerous secret, flattered his sense of superiority.

In sober fact young Hepplestall was intellectually superior to his contemporaries and, aware of it, resented the deference they paid to Sir Harry, the man of acres, the Beau, the Corinthian, the frequenter of White's and Almack's, leader unchallenged of local society. By his clandestine unorthodoxy, by his perpetual balancing on a tight-rope, he expressed to himself his opposition to Sir Harry; and there was Dorothy Verners, predestined in the eyes of the county for Sir Harry, waiting only for a question which would have the force of a command. Reuben had, in secret, his own idea of the future of Dorothy Verners. He aspired where he knew himself fitted to aspire, but the county would have dissolved in contemptuous guffaws at the thought of Reuben Hepplestall in the character of rival to Sir Harry. He brooded darkly in rebellion, outwardly accepting Whitworth's social despotism, inwardly a choked furnace of ambition.

It was little Bantison who involuntarily played the god in the machine and died that the Hepplestalls might be cotton lords in Lancashire. Bantison was not prepossessing; a short man, gross of body with a face like raw beef and hands offensively white, dressed in his clerical coat on which spatters of snuff and stains of wine smirked like a blasphemy, endowed with fine capacity for other people's Burgundy and distinguished by an eye that earned him, by reason rather of alertness than deformity, the nickname of "Swivel-Eyed Jack." Some vicars, like Goldsmith's, were content with forty pounds a year; the Reverend Mr. Bantison had that limited stipend with unlimited desires, and contrived by the use of his alert eye and the practice of discreet blackmail to lead a bachelor

life of reasonable amplitude. Not to be nice about the fellow, he was as unprincipled a wolf as ever masqueraded in a sheepskin; but he is not to infest this narrative for long.

They were at table at Sir Harry Whitworth's, who dined at six o'clock, latish, as became a man of fashion. There was acquiescence in that foible, but no imitation of a habit which was held to be an arbitrary encroachment on the right to drink. The ladies had, in strict moderation, to be treated civilly—at any rate, the ladies had to eat—so that Sir Harry's guests rarely drew up to the mahogany for the serious entertainment of the evening before eight o'clock, and a man of a position less assured than his would have been suspected of meanness and too great care for the contents of his cellar. But Whitworth was Whitworth and they shrugged their shoulders. After all, with good will and good liquor one can achieve geniality in an evening not beginning (for serious purposes) until eight.

The ladies dismissed to tea and to whatever insipid joys the drawing-room might hold, the men addressed themselves with brisk resolution to the task of doing noble justice to the best cellar in the county. They were there, candidly and purposefully, to drink, and it was never too late to mend sobriety, but under Sir Harry's roof the process had formality and the unbuttoned rusticity of native debauchery must be disciplined to the restraint of ordered toasts. A pedantic host, this young baronet, but his wines had quality, and they submitted with what patience they could summon to his idiosyncrasy. There were no laggards when Sir Harry bid them to his board.

Ignoring the parson—which, mostly, was what parsons were for and certainly made no breach of etiquette—Sir Harry himself gave the toast of “The King” with a faintly challenging air habitual to him but *démodé*. Lan-

cashire sentiment had veered since the forty-five and there was now no need, especially in Whitworth's company, to emphasize a loyalty they all shared. It was not a fervent loyalty and no one was expected to be exuberant about the Hanoverians, but bygones were bygones, and one took the court one found as one took the climate.

But did one? Did every one? Did, in especial, Reuben Hepple stall, whom Mr. Bantison watched so narrowly as he drank to the King? To Bantison the enigmatic was a provocation and a hope and as a specialist in enigmas he had his private notion that the whole of Hepple stall was not apparent on the surface: he nursed suspicion, precious because marketable if confirmed, that here was one who conserved the older loyalty, and he watched as he had watched before. Finger-glasses were on the table, but so crude a confession of faith as to pass his wine over the water was neither expected nor forthcoming and Hepple stall's gesture, except that it repeated one which Bantison had noted mentally when "The King" had been toasted on other occasions, was so nearly imperceptible as to seem unlikely to have significance. But it was a repetition, and did the repetition imply a ritual? It was improbable. The risk was high, the gain non-existent, the defiance in such company too blunt, the whole idea of expressing, however subtly, a rebellion in a house of loyalists was unreasonable. Still, as Reuben raised his glass, it hovered for an instant in the air, it made, ever so slightly, a pause and (was it?) an obeisance which seemed directed to his fob; and when Mr. Bantison sat down he frowned meditatively at the pools of mellow light reflected from the candles on the table and his face puckered into evil wrinkles till he looked like an obscene animal snarling to its spring; but that is only to say Mr. Bantison was thinking unusually hard.

He was thinking of young men, their follies, their un-

reasoning audacities and how these things happened by the grace of Providence to benefit their wise elders. His face at its best, when he was doing something agreeable like savoring Burgundy or (if so innocent an action is to be conceived of him) when he smelled a violet, was a mask of malice; it was horrible now as he weighed his chances of dealing to his profit with Reuben. Whether he was right or wrong in his particular suspicion, there was plainly something of the exceptional about this dark young man. Hepplestall, considered as prey, struck him as a tough, tooth-breaking victim, and Mr. Bantison had not the least desire to break his teeth. He decided not to hazard their soundness—their whiteness was remarkable—upon what was still conjecture. He wanted many things which money would buy, but an orange already in his blackmailing grip was yielding good juice and every circumstance conspired with the excellence of Sir Harry's Burgundy to persuade him to delay. His needs were not urgent. And yet, and yet—

But it wasn't Bantison's lucky night. As they sat down, Sir Harry cast a host's glance round the table in search of a subject with which to set the conversational ball rolling again, and saw the spasm of malevolence which marked Bantison's face in the moment of irresolution. "I'gad," he cried to the table at large, "will you do me the favor to observe Bantison? A gargoyle come to meat. If it isn't the prettiest picture I ever saw of devotion incarnate. Watch him meditating piety."

The company gave tongue obsequiously, ready in any case to dance when Whitworth piped, doubly ready in the case where a parson was the butt. Their mirth happened inopportunely for Bantison, proving at that crisis of his indecision, a turning point. Left alone, he would have remained passive: the taunt awoke aggression.

"I crave your pardon, Sir Harry. I was in thought."

"The pangs of it gave your face a woundy twist. Out with the harvest of it, man! A musing that gave you so much travail should shed new light on the kingdom of heaven."

"I was thinking," said Bantison, "of a kingdom more apocryphal; of the kingdom of the Stuarts," and his eye, called Swivel, fell accusingly on Hepplestall.

The attack was sudden, with the advantage of surprise, but in that company of slow-moving brains, already dulled by wine, there was none but Reuben who saw in Bantison's allusion and Bantison's quick-darting eye an attack at all. So far, the affair was easy. "They have their place," said Reuben gravely, "in history."

"And—," began Bantison combatively, but Sir Harry cut him short. "Drown history," he said, "and mend your thoughts, Bantison. A glass of wine with you." Aggression subsided in Bantison; he murmured, and felt, that it was an honor to drink with Sir Harry. For the time, the incident was closed.

Reuben pondered the case of Mr. Bantison, worm or adder, and admitted to disquiet. This devil of an unconsidered parson, this Swivel-Eyed Jack who seemed good for nothing but to suck up nourishment, and to be the target of contemptuous and contemptible wit, had got within his guard, had plainly detected the meaning of the obscure ritual by which he honored the king over the water and mentally snapped his fingers at Sir Harry even while he dined with him. And Reuben Hepplestall did not mean to forego that mental luxury of finger-snapping at Sir Harry. He damned Sir Harry, but damned more heartily this unexpected impediment to the damning of Sir Harry. And if Bantison showed resolution, so much the worse for him; of the two it was certainly not Reuben Hepplestall who was coming to shipwreck; and how much the worse it was for Bantison depended ex-

actly on that reverend gentleman's movements. The first move, at any rate, had been a foolish one: it had warned Reuben.

The second move was still more foolish: really, Mr. Bantison's career as a blackmailer had lain in rosy places, and he grew careless through success. Besides, since Sir Harry had silenced him, forgiven him, drunk with him, Mr. Bantison, as blackmailer, was off duty and a man must have some relaxation; but Burgundy plays the deuce with discretion and was, all the time, brightening his wits in the same ratio as it made him careless of Hepplestall's resentment. An idea, that was not at all a stupid idea, but in itself a dazzling idea, came into his mind, and the glamor of it obscured any discretion the Burgundy might have left him. Hanging from Hepplestall's fob were several seals. They interested Mr. Bantison.

By this time not a few appreciators of the Whitworth cellar had slid from their chairs to the floor, and there was nothing exceptional about that. For what reason were their chairs so well designed, so strongly made and yet so excellently balanced but that a man might slide gently from them without the danger of a nasty jar to his chin as it hit the table? Chairs beautiful, and—adapted to their users when to be drunk without shame was a habit. Some one was on the floor by Hepplestall, leaving a vacant chair. Bantison, obsessed by his idea, exaggerated slightly a drunkenness by no means imaginary, lurched from his seat on a mission of discovery and took the empty place by Hepplestall. "What's the hour?" he asked.

Hepplestall gave him his shoulder, glanced at the clock on the wall behind him and stated the time.

"You do not consult your watch," said Bantison.

"I have the habit," said Hepplestall, "of doing things

in my own way," and a soberer man than Bantison would have taken warning at his menace. Mr. Bantison was either too far gone to recognize the mettle of his adversary or else he was merely vinous and reckless. With his notable eye on the seal which he suspected (rightly) to be, in fact, a phial containing water, he made a bold snatch at Hepplestall's fob.

Sir Harry, comparatively sober, no partisan of Hepplestall's, but certainly none of the vicar's, saw the snatch and rose with a "Good God, has Bantison taken to picking pockets?" but there was, even at that demonstration, nothing like a sensation in the room; they were neutrally ready to acquiesce in picking pockets, in an outraged host, in anything. They were country gentlemen late in the evening.

The snatch, ill-timed, had failed of its objective. Mr. Bantison clawed thin air in ludicrous perplexity and Hepplestall, assured by Sir Harry's gesture of his sympathy, took his opportunity. He rose, with his hand down Bantison's neck, clutching cravat, coat, all that there was to clutch, and with a polite: "You permit?" and a bow to Whitworth, carried the parson one-handed to the window. Bantison choked speechlessly, imprecations and accusations alike smothered by the taut neck-band round his throat. Hepplestall opened the window, breathing heavily, lifted the writhing sinner and dropped him through it.

"And that's the end of him," commented Sir Harry, more truly than he knew. "You're in fine condition, sir. A glass of wine with you."

CHAPTER II

SMOKED HERRING

THAT night ended, as the nights of such gatherings were wont to end, with some safely, others precariously horsed, others bundled unceremoniously by Sir Harry's servants into coaches where their wives received them without disapproval, and the rest accommodated on the premises. The absence of Mr. Bantison escaped their notice.

The Reverend and unregretted Bantison was absent from the leave-taking because he had already taken leave. Mr. Bantison was dead. To the sorrow of none, and the satisfaction of a few who had paid forced tribute to the observation of his eye, Mr. Bantison was dead. It was agreed at the breakfast table that he died of apoplexy and a very probable end too, though not strictly in accordance with the evidence. Apoplexy implies a spontaneity of termination, and Mr. Bantison's end had lacked spontaneity.

They were all very heartily cynical about it, taking their formidable breakfast at Sir Harry's, and no one more cynical than Whitworth. A parson more or less, what did it matter? There was none of that overnice regard for the sanctity of human life characteristic of the late nineteenth century, to which the early twentieth brought so drastic a corrective; but though they agreed on their collective attitude, there was nothing to prevent stray recollections coming to mind and the facts of the

case were known to more than Whitworth and Hepplestall. In public, it was apoplexy; in the wrong privacy it was still apoplexy, but in the right, there was censure of Hepplestall. True, the snuffing-out of Bantison was no more reprehensible in itself than the crushing of a gnat, but who knew that the habit of manslaughter, once acquired, might not grow on a man? It wasn't worse than gossip, and idle whisper, but the whisper reached Hepplestall and he felt that it was not good for the man who hoped to marry Dorothy Verners to be the subject of gossip, however quiet. The gossip was more humorous than malicious, and it was confined to a circle, but that circle was the one which mattered and Reuben felt that in his rivalry with Whitworth he had suffered a rebuff through the death of Mr. Bantison. And there was that matter of the Stuarts. "Curse the Stuarts" was his feeling now towards that charming race; he saw them, with complete injustice, as first cause of his eclipse. Besides, if Bantison had detected him, there was the possibility of other open eyes. Altogether, the symbol of his defiance of Sir Harry seemed ill-chosen and the sooner he changed it the better. Something, he decided, was urgently required, not to silence chatter (for chatter in itself was good, proclaiming him exceptional), but to set tongues wagging so briskly with the new that they would forget to wag about the old. He felt the need of something to play the part of red herring across the trail, and his red herring took the sufficiently surprising shape of a cotton-mill.

It surprised and scandalized the landed gentry, his friends of the Whitworth set, because the caste system was nearly watertight: certainly, of the two chief divisions, the landowners and the rest, Reuben belonged with the first, while cotton spinners were rated low amongst the rest. They were traders, of course, and not, at that

stage, individually rich traders: the master spinners were spinners who had been men and rose by their own efforts to the control of other men. This was the pastoral age of cotton, going but not gone. It went, in one sense, when they harnessed machinery to water-power, but isolated factories on the banks of tumbling streams were related rather to the old régime of the scattered cottage hand-spinner and hand-weaver than to the coming era of the steam-made cotton town with its factories concentrated on the coal-fields; and, in the eyes of the gentry, steam was the infamy.

In Reuben's, steam was the ideal: he knew nothing about it, had hardly heard of Arkwright or Hargreaves, Kay or Crompton who, amongst them, made the water-power factory; and Watt of the practicable steam-engine, Watt who gave us force and power, Watt the father of industrial civilization, the inventor who was not responsible for the uses others made of his inventions, so let us be equitable to his memory, let us not talk of him as either the world's greatest scapegoat or its most fruitful accident—Watt was almost news to Reuben Hepplestall when he met Martin Everett in Manchester.

The meeting was fortuitous. Everett, an architect, one of Arkwright's men who had quarreled with him, was kicking his heels in the ante-room of a Manchester lawyer's office when Reuben was shown in. Certainly, Reuben was not to be kept waiting by the lawyer as Everett, a suppliant, an applicant for capital, was likely to wait, but the lawyer was engaged and the two young men fell to talking. Everett, something of a fanatic for steam, the new, the unorthodox, the insurgent challenge to the landed men, at once struck fire on Hepplestall. He turned lecturer, steam's propagandist, condemning water-power as an archaism, and when Reuben admitted he had come to his lawyer for the very purpose of giving instruc-

tions for the sale of land and the initiation of plans for a factory on, he suggested, the banks of a river, Everett had small difficulty in converting him to steam.

"I meant to bury Bantison," said Reuben. "Now we'll boil him." Everett was puzzled.

"You burn wood in your house, sir?" he asked.

"And coal. Is it to the point?"

"The coal is. You get it—where?"

"There is a seam."

"Then that is the site of your factory."

"God!" said Hepplestall, "it will be a monstrous sight."

He spoke as if that gladdened him.

"The building, sir, will have dignity," the architect reproved him.

"Aye? But I'm thinking of the engine. The furnace. The coal. A red herring? A smoked herring!"

He relished the thought again. By steam (Lord, was he ever in the camp of those fantastical reactionaries, the Jacobites?), by steam he would symbolize his opposition to Whitworth and the Bloods. He was going into trade and so would be, anyhow, ostracized, but more than that, into steam, gambling on the new, the hardly tried, the strange power that the Bloods had only heard of to deride it; going into it blindly, on general hearsay, and the particular *ipse dixit* of a young enthusiast who might be (except that Reuben trusted his insight and knew better) a charlatan or a deluded fool; and for Reuben there was the attraction of taking chances, of the impudent, audacious challenge to fortune and to the outraged Bloods.

"Do you know, Everett," he said, "a man might turn atheist expecting less stricture than I expect who make the leap from land to steam." It came into his mind that Dorothy Verners was further off than ever now. "Everett," he said, "extremes meet. We'll call that fac-

tory the 'Dorothy.' Gad, if we win! If we win!" He gripped Martin's hand with agonizing strength and went into the lawyer's room, leaving Everett to wonder what sort of an eccentric he had hooked.

The lawyer, who had been asked by letter to be prepared with advice, found all that brushed curtly aside: he was to take instructions from a client who knew what he wanted, not to minister to a mind in doubt, and very definite and remarkable instructions he found them. "The whole of your land to be sold, excepting where the presence of coal is, or will be within a week, known? And all for a steam-driven factory! Sir, I advised your father. I believe he trusted me. It is my duty to warn you and—"

"Thankee, sir," Reuben interrupted him. "I may tell you I looked for this from you, but I don't appreciate it the less because I expected it. You advised my father, you shall continue to advise me."

"That you may do the opposite?"

"No. That when I go driving through new country I may have a brake on my wheels."

"Well . . . am I to lock your wheels this time?"

"I'm going driving," said Reuben resolutely, "but you shall find me some one to teach me to handle the reins. I must learn my trade, sir. Find me some factory owner who will sell me his secrets cheap, near my coal-lands if that's possible, that I may watch Everett at work."

"If a Hepplestall condescends to trade," said the lawyer without conscious flattery, "he will be welcomed by the traders. There will be no difficulty about that. Indeed you have one on your own land, Peter Bradshaw, with a factory on a stream of yours and I believe he has both spinning jennies and weaving-looms. Go and hear what Peter thinks of steam."

"His disapproval will be a testimony to it. I'll see

Peter," said Reuben, and was away before the lawyer had opportunity to voice the score of stock arguments that age keeps handy for the correction of rash youth. He had then the more to say to Everett, the corrupter, the begetter in Reuben of his mad passion for steam, and it's little satisfaction he got out of that. Young Everett was to realize a dream, he was to be given, he thought, a free hand to build a steam-driven factory as he thought a steam-driven factory ought to be built, and the prudent lawyer's arguments, accusations, menaces, were no more to him than the murmurings a man hears in his sleep when what he sees is a vision splendid: it was only some time afterwards that Everett woke up to find in Hepplestall not the casual financier of his dream in stone, but a highly informed, critical collaborator who tempered zeal for steam with disciplined knowledge and contributed as usefully as Everett himself to make the "Dorothy" the finest instrument of its day for the manufacture of cotton.

He got the knowledge chiefly from Bradshaw, partly from others who had carried manufacture beyond the narrow methods of Bradshaw's water-wheel. It lay, this primitive factory, in a gentle valley amongst rounded hills of gritstone and limestone: a chilly country, lacking the warmth of the red earth of the South, backward in agriculture, nourishing more oats than wheat and, in the bleak uplands, incapable of tillage. Coarse grass fought there with heather, but if there was little color on the moors save when the heather flowered in royal purple and the gorse hung out its flame, there was rich green in the valleys and the polish of a humid atmosphere on healthy trees. A spacious rolling country, swelling to hills which, never spectacular, were still considerable: a clean country of wide views and lambent distances in those days before the black smoke came and seared.

Not many miles away, sheltered amongst old elms, was Hepplestall's own house; above it the hill known to be coal-bearing, where Everett was to build, on the hill top, the steam-driven factory, a beacon and a challenge to the old order. So, aptly to Reuben's purpose, lay Bradshaw's factory and house, the two in one and the whole as little intrusive on the scene as a farmhouse.

When he came in that first day, Peter was in the factory and if Reuben had had any doubts of making this the headquarters of his apprenticeship, the sight of Phoebe Bradshaw would have removed them. To one man the finest scenery is improved by a first-class hotel in the foreground; to another, a stiff task is made tolerable by the presence, in his background, of a pretty woman. Phoebe had prettiness in her linsey-woolsey gown with the cotton print handkerchief about her shoulders; she was small and she was soft of feature. You could not look at her face and say, of this feature or of that, that it had shapeliness, but in a sort of gentle improvisation, she had her placid charm. She sat at needlework, at something obscurely useful, but her pose, as he entered, was that of a lady at leisure, amusing herself with the counterfeit of toil.

Bradshaw's daughter, had Bradshaw not thrived and lifted himself out of the class of the employed, would have been in the factory, at work like the other girls; but she aspired to ladyhood and, fondly, he abetted her. He was on the up-grade, and let the fact be manifest in the gentility of his daughter! There was pride in it, and somehow there was the payment of a debt due to her dead mother who had worked at home spinning while Peter wove the yarn she spun in a simpler day than this. What the late Mrs. Bradshaw would have thought of a daughter who aped the fine lady, or of a father who encouraged

her, is not to the point: Peter idolized Phoebe, and she sat in his house to figure for Reuben as an unforeseen mitigation in his job of learning manufacture.

He proceeded to address himself with gallantry to the pleasing mitigation. She rose, impressed, at the coming to that house of an authentic Olympian. "Pray be seated, Miss Bradshaw," he said. "For it is Miss Bradshaw?" he added, implying surprise to find her what she was.

"I am Phoebe Bradshaw," she told him. "You would see my father? He is in the factory. Will you not sit while I go and call him?"

For a man intent upon stern purpose, Reuben felt remarkably unhurried. "My business can wait," he said, gesturing her again to her chair. "It has no such urgency that you need disturb yourself for me and turn a lady into a message-bearer." He noted the quick flush of pleasure which rose to her cheeks on the word "lady." "Indeed," he went on, "I find myself blame-worthy and unaccountably a laggard that this is the first time I have made your acquaintance."

"Oh! I . . . I am not much in the world, sir."

"The world is the loser, Miss Bradshaw. But it is not too late to find a remedy for that. They tell us the North is poor soil for flowers, and with an answer like you to their lies it would be criminal to hide it."

Crude flattery, but it hit the target. "I? A flower? Oh, sir—"

"Why call me sir? If you were what—well, to be frank, what I expected to find you, a spinner's wench, no more than that, why then your stirring me would be justifiable. There are social laws. I don't deny it."

"We have no position," she assented.

"What's position when there's beauty? You have that which cuts across the laws. Beauty, and not rustic beauty either, but beauty that's been worked on and re-

fined . . . I go too fast, I say too much. Excuse a man in the heat of making a discovery for being frank about what he's found and forget my frankness and forgive it. I spoke only to convince you that a 'sir' from you to me is to reverse the verities."

"But you are Mr. Hepplestall?"

"Then call me so. I mount no pedestal for you."

Then Peter came in, and Hepplestall retired his thoughts of Phoebe to some secondary brain-cell that lay becomingly remote from Dorothy Verners and from his immediate plan of picking up knowledge from Peter. The lawyer had been right: there was no question of Peter's setting a price upon his trade secrets, he was ravished by the interest his ground-landlord was pleased to take in his little factory and if he was puzzled to find Hepplestall intelligent and searching in his questions, there was none more pleased than Peter to answer with painstaking elaboration. Once Reuben asked, "Are there not factories driven by steam?"

And Peter was wonderfully shrewd. "There are fools in every trade," he said, "hotheads that let wild fancies carry off their commonsense."

"Steam is a fancy, then? It does not work?"

"I have never seen it work," said Peter, which was true; but he had not gone to look as, presently, Reuben went, sucking up experience everywhere with a bee-like industry. Meantime, he astonished Peter by proposing himself as paying guest while he worked side by side with the men and women in the factory.

"I have the whim," said Reuben and saw astonishment fade from Peter's face. They had their whims, these gentry, and indulged them, and if Hepplestall's was the eccentric one of wishing to experience in his own person the life of a factory hand, why, it wasn't for Bradshaw to oppose him. And Peter smiled aside when Reuben said

that he would try it for a week. A week! A day of such toil would cure any fine gentleman of such a caprice. But Peter was to be surprised again, he was to find Reuben not tiring in a day, nor in a week, not to be tempted from the factory even by a cock-fight to which Peter and half his men went as a matter of course, dropping the discipline of hours and forgetting in a common sportsmanship that they ranked as master and man—oh, those gentler days before the Frankenstein, machinery, quite gobbled up man who made him!—but as time went on, still, after three months, working as spinner at Peter's water-driven jennies and becoming as highly skilled as any man about the place. Even when the truth was out, when most of Hepplestall's acres had gone to the hammer, and one could see from Bradshaw's window the nascent walls of Reuben's factory, Peter was still obtuse, still happy at the thought of the honor done to cotton by the Olympian, still blind to the implications of the coming into spinning, so near to him, of a capitalist on the greater scale. He was to be cured of that blindness, but what, even if he had foreseen the future from the beginning, could he have done? In the matter of Phoebe, no doubt, he could have acted, he could have sent her away; but Hepplestall in other matters was not so much mere man as the representative of steam. What could he have done to counter steam? Bradshaw was doomed and steam was his undoing, and, though the particular instrument, Hepplestall, was to have, for him, a peculiar malignancy, the seeds of his ruin were sown in his own obstinate conservatism. He had seen visions of a great progress when water-power superseded arm-power, but his vision stopped short of steam. Peter was growing old.

CHAPTER III

PHOEBE BRADSHAW

IF Hepplestall calculated much, which is a damnable vice in youth, it is possibly some consolation to know that he miscalculated the effect upon the county of his plunge, for at this stage his eclipse was total and he had not anticipated that. They did not forget Bantison in remembering the rising walls of his factory, and still less in the thought that Reuben who had sat at their tables was working with his hands as a spinner. They added offense to offense; if he was seen he was cut; and their chatter reached him even at Bradshaw's where, as he knew very well, gentry talk must be loud indeed to penetrate.

He had overestimated his strength to resist public opinion. He was a proud man and he was outcast and, set himself as he did with ferocious energy to his task, he fell short of forgetfulness. Dorothy Verners was at the end of a stony, tortuous road; it would be, at the best, a long time before he reached the end of that road and the chances that she would still be there, that Whitworth, carelessly secure as he was, would wait long enough to leave her there for Hepplestall, seemed to him, in these days of despondency, too remote for reason. He would never bridge the gulf in time and his patience ebbed away. Not that he ever doubted that, in the end, in money, position, reputation, he would outdistance Whitworth, but Dorothy Verners, as a symbol of his ascendancy, was dwindling to the diminished status of an ambition now

seen to be too sanguine. He had not realized how much he would be irked by the contempt of the county.

If, at the end of all, he had them at his feet! Aye, so he would, but wouldn't it be more humbling for them if they came licking, along with his, the feet of a wife of his who was not of their order? Wouldn't he so triumph the more exultantly? He argued the case against his first intentions, seeking justification for falling honestly in love with Phoebe Bradshaw.

Honest love was, at first, very far from his purpose. A gentleman didn't seduce his host's daughter, but that rule of conduct postulated that the host be equally a gentleman and Bradshaw seemed, when Reuben came, unfathomably his inferior, and Bradshaw's daughter, for all her airs, the sort of flower hung by the roadside to be plucked by any grand seigneur. Nor did he ever, at the back of his mind, move far from that attitude. His tolerant association with these people was an immense condescension, justified only by ulterior purpose. But if marriage with Phoebe fitted his purpose, as in his first reaction from the disdain of the county it seemed to do, why, then, though he never thought of himself as belonging with the manufacturers, it might in the long run prove a famous score against the county.

Phoebe had advantages. She was at hand, he saw her every day at meals and was ready to believe that she revealed every day some new, shy prettiness, she was tractable, malleable in the future and his without effort in the present, and it was comforting to think of her softness when all his else was harsh endeavor and wounded pride and a long stern struggle to success. While Dorothy Vners was of the struggle, yet a man must relax sometimes, as Mr. Bantison had thought when he put Burgundy before the discretion which becomes a blackmailer. Reuben chewed upon it, not reconciled to surrendering

Dorothy, not quite convinced by the most convincing of arguments he addressed to himself, unwilling, even if they had convinced, to let go any part of his full scheme, but inclining, feeling himself a bit of a fool, a bit of an apostate, and very much more a prodigy of generosity, to look upon Phoebe as one whom he might make his wife.

Thus (on the whole) well-intentioned towards her, he proposed one summer's morning to take her out walking, which was partly a gesture addressed to his hesitations, and partly a deliberate means to a closer acquaintance than he could compass indoors in the single living-room where Peter hampered by too faithful attendance on his pupil. He mentioned his wish, a little too grandly, a little too much like a royal command.

Phoebe had her wisdom and the weeks of their intercourse had rubbed away the first bloom of his divinity: he ate like other mortals, and, like the sort of mortals she despised in her pose of ladyhood, he labored in the factory. She had conceived ambition which, as he seemed to level himself down to her, looked not impossible to realize, if she sustained in his eyes her quality of ladyhood. And to go out had its perils. She flowered indoors and her little graces withered in the open air, when she knew she reverted to type, walked freely with great strides and swung across the moors like any weaver's lass hurrying to work. These things, she thought, were discounts off her value: but they might, just possibly, be a winning card. They might announce that she had variety.

"To walk," she said, "with you?"

"Oh, not too far for a lady," he assured her, "and not too fast."

"You," she retorted, "ride too much. I'll walk you off your legs." So she challenged him, with wisdom.

If they were to make a walking match of it, at least

they were not to be philanderers, they were not going out only as far as the first heather, there to sit together in a solitude that might spell danger. And she announced spirit to a man who would (she knew) appreciate it, she declared that if her inches were few they had vigor, that if she had ladyhood it was skin-deep, that she wasn't a one-volume abridgment of imbecility, not his for the beckoning; and she went defiantly, to put on a bonnet and a shawl which would have been a violent and successful assault on any complexion less admirable than hers. She was, indeed, playing her gambling card.

And, to his surprise, he liked it. This, if it were not mere flicker, if it were not instinctive counterfeiting of a feminine move in a sex-game, was a spirit which would serve her well, and him too, in the drawing-rooms of the county in the future he was contemplating for them both. Wasn't it fact that my Lord Montacute had married his cook and that she had made him a notable Lady? And he wasn't a lord nor Phoebe a cook.

Small Phoebe kept her promise, too. She came of hardy stock, and she hadn't spent the day, as he had, standing at a spinning-jenny. He had to cry her mercy, flinging himself exhausted on the heather.

"I said you ride too much," she exulted, secure that he did not feign fatigue, standing over him while the blood raced happily through tingling limbs.

"And you," he retorted, "too little."

"I? I do not ride at all. You know we have no horses."

"It will be necessary for you to ride," he said.

"Why so?" she asked him. "Haven't I proved that I can walk?"

"Still," he said, "I shall have horses brought tomorrow. Will you have me for riding master?"

"To ride I should need a habit."

"Which I provide."

She held her breath. For what was it "necessary" for her to ride if not that he was thinking of a future for her that jumped giddily with her ambition? Still, she kept her head; still, she sensed the value of offering this man persistent opposition, and all she said was "Are you rested now?"

He rose, to find himself aware of strange tremblings, not to be accounted for by tiredness, of a dampness on his brow, and, when he spoke, of a thickened voice. "You shall have the habit to-morrow," he promised her.

"They burned warlocks once," she mocked him. A warlock is a wizard. "Habits do not come in a day except by magic."

"Yours will come by road, from Manchester. I ride in for it to-morrow."

"Neglecting your work?"

"I choose my work," he said, and strode off, leaving her to follow as she might, but if he thought to outdistance her, he reckoned without the grit of Phoebe. As a lady, he could find a dozen chinks a day in her Brummagen armor; as a country lass she had a native energy that all her vanities left unimpaired, and set what hot pace he could, she kept level with him like a taunt which refuses to stop ringing in a man's ears. If this was a duel, Phoebe was scoring winning points that night. "But a horse will test your mettle, my wench," he was thinking savagely, and with relief that the idea of a horse had come to him.

"When I go driving through new country," he had told the lawyer, "I like a brake on my wheels," and he was feeling very urgently the need of a brake on his wheels in the new country through which he suddenly discovered himself to be driving now. He put it to himself in phrases that may or may not be paradoxical.

"Damn her, I love her," he said aloud as he undressed that night.

Phoebe, in her room across the passage, mingled fear with triumph. If one is not born to horses, horses terrify. In that, more than in anything else, lay the difference between Phoebe's world and Reuben's. If her ladyhood was pretentious and calculated instead of instinctive, well, theirs did not go very deep either. There was culture in that age, but not, extensively, in Lancashire. Culture hugged the capital, throwing outposts in the great houses of the Home Counties. In Manchester itself there were bookish people, but in the county sport was the touchstone, and if horsemanship in the skilled sense was not expected of a woman, she must at any rate be not shy of a horse. It was almost the test of gentry.

When the thought came to him as he panted on the heather it had not, indeed, been as a test of her quality. At first, he was more generous than that. To be his wife, she must ride; she did not ride; and he must teach her. Only later did he see it as a trial of her fitness, as she, at once, saw it, gathering courage for an ordeal. If she must ride to win this husband, then, cost what it might, she would ride.

He kept his word, taking for the first time a full day off from his education as a spinner, demanded measurements of her at breakfast, rode with them into Manchester, was back by early evening with a habit and, from his stables, a horse used to a side-saddle: doing all with characteristic concentration of energy that brooked no opposition from any such bombastical pleader for delay as the outraged habit-maker.

Hepplestell commanded, and Hepplestell received.

There are degrees in habits? Then this was a habit of high degree. Whether it was a lover's free-handed gift or the circumstance of a trial by ordeal, it was the best

it could be, and Phoebe's prettiness was equal to it. Indeed, she trended by choice to a fluffiness of dress and a cheapness in taste that Reuben, who was not fastidious, had not failed to note. You have seen, perhaps, a modern hospital nurse in uniform and the same nurse in mufti? That was the difference between Phoebe in her habit and Phoebe as he had seen her hitherto. More than ever, he felt conviction that no ill-judged passion was leading him astray, that here, when good dressmakers had clothed her, was his match and the match for the county. He tried to be skeptical, to criticize, and found, at the end of a scrutiny too frank to be well-mannered, that there was nothing here to criticize.

She smiled, bravely, aware from her glass that what he saw was good, aware that he could not see how big a thing her horse appeared to her, how far above the ground the saddle was, how shrunken small she felt. But it was consoling to know that if she was going to break her neck, she was to do it in the finest clothes she had ever worn. His look of candid admiration was a tonic.

"This is your horse," he said. "We called him Hector." She made Hector's acquaintance prettily, but, plainly, she missed his point, and he made it more definitely. "Of course, you may rename him now that he is your own."

"Mine? My horse? But, Mr. Hepplestall—"

"Have you your salts?" he asked, cutting short her cry of surprise. A horse more or less, he would have her think, was triviality when Reuben Hepplestall was in the mood to give.

"Salts?" she repeated, puzzled.

"In case you swoon," he said gravely, and not ironically either. It was the swooning age.

But not for Phoebe. Did ladies swoon at a first riding-lesson? She doubted it: they took that lesson young, as

children, in the years before they were modish and swooning, and, in any case, it wasn't her ladyhood that was in question now; it was her courage. "I shall not swoon," she said, and he relished the bravado of it.

Spirit? Aye, she had spirit to be wife of his, and it behoved him not to break it. If he had had thoughts, brutally, of making this test of her as harsh as he could, that was all altered now by the sight of her adorning the habit instead of overwhelmed by it, caressing Hector instead of shrinking from him, and he saw tenderness as the prime virtue of a riding-master. She wasn't going to take a fall if he could prevent it.

Between them, between Reuben and Hector, a sober animal who had carried Reuben's mother and hadn't forgotten his manners in the years since her death, and between these two and Phoebe's pluck, they managed a lesson which gave her confidence for later lessons when the instructor's mood was less indulgent. Reuben hadn't tenderness as a habit. Neither had she very staunchly the habit of courage, but all the courage she had was wrought up for these occasions and, thanks to the sobriety of the good Hector, it served. She took a toss one day, but fell softly into heather and rose smiling before he had leaped to the ground. His last doubts that he loved her fled when she smiled that day. "'Fore Gad," he cried, "you're thoroughbred." It was the sweetest praise.

That was a moment of supreme exaltation, but, all the time, Phoebe was living now in upper air. For her, manifestly and openly for her, he was neglecting what had seemed the only thing he lived for; he spent long days riding with Phoebe instead of laboring to learn in the factory. Once or twice when he had the opportunity of inspecting some steam-driven works not too remote, he took her with him, leaving her in state obsequiously served

in an inn while he studied the engine-house and the driving bands and the power-looms of the factory, refusing the manufacturer's invitation to dinner and offending a host to come back where she waited for him at the inn. Peter might croak, and Peter did croak like any raven and shake his head, and Peter was told he was old-fashioned, and was put in his place as parents have always been put in their place when young love takes the bit between its teeth. Hepplestall, and his lass? It was a piece of luck too rare to be true. He prophesied sad fate for her, he wished she had a mother—men are handicapped—he spoke of sending for her aunt: all the time, too overawed by Hepplestall's significance to be more effective as an obstacle than a cork bobbing on the surface of a flood. Protest to Reuben himself, or even appeal, was sheer impossibility for Bradshaw, who was almost feudal in his subservience to gentry. He saw danger, warned Phoebe, was laughed at for his pains and turned fatalist. Phoebe cared for neither his spoken forebodings nor his morose resignation. Phoebe was happy, she tasted victory, she was sure of Reuben now and so sure that she began to look beyond the fact that she had got him and was holding him, she began to concede herself the luxury of loving him.

Phoebe was a sprinter, capable of effort if the effort need not be sustained. She had attracted Reuben, and in the doing it had submitted to severe self-discipline, to a vigilance and a courage which went beyond those of the normal Phoebe. Accomplishment went to her head like wine; she wasn't prudent Phoebe on a day when, as their horses were at the door, a message came from Everett asking Reuben to go at once to discuss some detail of equipment of the now nearly completed factory. She wasn't prudent or she would never have taken such an occasion to plead that he had promised her that day

for riding. She knew what his factory meant to him, knew, too, how jealous he was of his hard-won knowledge, how keen to match it against Everett's older experience; yet she asked him to imply, by keeping a promise to ride, that she came before the factory. And he loved her. Whatever the depth of his love, whatever the chances that this was the love that lasts, he loved her then. "Tell Mr. Everett," he said to the messenger, "that I authorize him to use his own judgment."

Which Everett very gladly did, promptly and, he thought, irremediably. It was a point on which he had his own ideas, differing from Reuben's, and carte blanche at this stage, after the endless controversies, of Reuben's obstinate collaboration, was a godsend that Everett wasn't going to throw away by being dilatory.

It resulted that when Reuben next visited the works, he was confronted by a *fait accompli*, and by Everett's hardly concealed smirk of glee. "The thing, as you see, is done now. I had your authority to do as I thought best," said Everett.

"Then undo and re-do," said Reuben, sourly.

"Pull down!" gasped Everett. "But—"

"You heard me," growled Reuben, turning on his heel from a disgruntled architect who had been too previous with self-congratulations on getting his own way for once.

And Phoebe was triumphing at home, secure of her Reuben, in ecstasy at her tested power over him.

Reuben, too, was thinking of that power, of how he had yielded to it, of Samson and Delilah and of the dry-rot that sets in in a man's strength when he delivers his will into a woman's keeping. It was a dark, inscrutable Reuben who came home that night to Bradshaw's; beyond Phoebe's skill to smooth away the irritation furrows from that brow. She used her artless remedy; she fed him

well, and persuaded herself that no more was wrong than that he came in hungry. He was watching her that night with critical eyes and she was aware of nothing but that his gaze never left her: its fidelity rejoiced her.

He flung himself vigorously at work, after that. There was woman, a snare, and work, the sane alternative, there was the zest of it, the mere exercise of it to sweat evil humors out of a man. By now he knew all that Bradshaw's factory could teach him, and, by his inspections of modern factories, much more; but his own place was not quite ready, his organization was complete on paper and till the day came for applying his knowledge, time had to be filled somehow and as well at Bradshaw's as anywhere else. Phoebe found herself neglected. He did not ride, or, if he did, it was alone. It came to her that she had made too sure of him; he hadn't mentioned marriage, he was drifting from her. What could she do to bind him to her?

Then he relented. She was suffering and he thought, in a tender mood, that it hurt him to see her suffer. Wasn't he making a mountain of a molehill, wasn't he unjust to blame her for the consequences of his weakness? He was a most chivalrous gentleman when he next invited her to ride with him, and she accepted, meekly. There lay the difference between the then and the now. Then they were comrades, now he condescended and he did not know it. But it was still his thought that Phoebe was to be his wife, and in the comfortable glow of forgiveness, in horse-exercise on a pleasant afternoon with one whose complexion was proof against any high light, who was a plucky rider and his accustomed fellow on these rides, they achieved again a genuine companionship. His doubts and her fears alike dissolved in what seemed the mellowed infallibility of that perfect afternoon.

Two other riders came in sight, meeting them, along

the road—a lady, followed by her groom. Dorothy Verners sitting her horse as if she had been cradled on it, straight, tall Dorothy whose beauty was so different from Phoebe's soft prettiness. Dorothy had beauty like a birthright. She came of generations of women whose first duty was to be admirable, who had, as it were, experimented long ago with beauty and had fixed its lines for their successors. Where Phoebe suggested a hasty improvisation of comeliness, where, in her, comeliness was unexpected and almost an impertinence, in Dorothy it was authentic and assured.

Had Reuben, seeing Phoebe in the magic vision of his love, called her a thoroughbred because she took a fall without blubbering? It was a compliment, and he had meant it. He had meant it because she had, surprisingly, not flinched. But of the real thoroughbreds, of those who were, without compliment, thoroughbred, one would take for granted that they did not flinch and the surprise would be not that they did not flinch, but if they did. He had not been seeing Dorothy Verners lately; he had been forgetting her authenticity; and he hadn't the slightest doubt, watching her approach, that he belonged with her order, that he was an aristocrat who, if he stooped to trade, stooped only to rise again. He saw himself through his own eyes.

And Dorothy looked at him through hers, seeing a dark man, not unhandsome, who was of good stock, but a nonentity until he had brought unpleasant notoriety upon himself by too summary a method of dealing with Mr. Bantison and, after that, had stepped down to association with the manufacturers. No doubt it was a manufacturer's daughter with whom he took his ride. Some of them she had heard, upstarts, did ride. A man who had lost caste, a man to be ignored. Would it hurt him to be, emphatically, ignored by her? He deserved to

be hurt, but probably his skin was thick and, in any case, why was she wasting thought on him? He was cut by the county: she had not to create a precedent. She did what she knew others did. She cut him dead, and it came, unreasonably, as a shock to Hepplestall.

He was used to the cut direct, he didn't even tighten his lips now when one of his former acquaintance passed him by without a glance. But he hadn't anticipated this, he hadn't included Dorothy, and her contempt struck at him like a blow. It wasn't what Dorothy stood for, it wasn't that she was the reigning toast, and that to carry her off was to have been his splendid score off Whitworth. It was, simply, that she was the one woman, and, yes, he admitted her right to be contemptuous; he had permitted her to see him in demeaning company. He looked at Phoebe with intolerable hatred in his eyes, he could have found satisfaction in lashing her with his whip till he was exhausted. Well, he didn't do that.

But Phoebe comprehended something of his thought. She tried—God knows she tried—to win him back to her as they rode home. She chattered gayly, keeping it up bravely while jealousy and fear gnawed her heart, and Hepplestall stared glumly straight ahead with never a word for Phoebe. Her words were like sea foam breaking idly on granite.

Words didn't do. Then, what would? Desperately, she came to her decision. He was slipping from her, there was wreck, but there was still the possibility of rescue. When she said "Good night," there was invitation in her eye; and something, not love, took him, later, across the passage to her room. Phoebe's last gambling card was played.

CHAPTER IV

ALMACK'S CLUB

MR. LUKE VERNERS put on his boots in his lodgings in Albemarle Street, St. James, in a very evil mood. He was in London, and ordinarily liked to be in London although it was a place where a man must remember his manners, where he wasn't a cock crowing on his dung-hill, but a mighty small atom in a mighty big crowd; but London with his wife and his daughter was a cruel paradox. Why the plague did a man cramp his legs in a coach for all those miles from Lancashire to London if it wasn't to get away from wife and daughter? And here he was tied to the family petticoats, in London. It was enough to put any man into bad temper.

As a rule, Mr. Verners was a tolerant person. In a squat little volume published in the year 1822 and called "A Man of the World's Dictionary," a Virtuous Man is defined as "a being almost imaginary. A name given to him who has the art of concealing his vices and shutting his eyes to those of others," and so long as the vices of others did not interfere with his own, and so long as the others were of his own order, Mr. Verners was a candidate for virtue, under this definition. But the man born to be a perfect individualist is at a disadvantage when he owns an estate and feels bound by duty to marry and beget an heir: it isn't the moderns who discovered that marriage clogs selfishness.

Mr. Verners had an heir, but not, as it happened, till

Dorothy had come first. If she hadn't come first, she would not have come at all; but she came, and dazzlingly, and if there is something agreeable in being the father of a beauty, there is also something harassing. A wife, after all, is only a wife, but with a monstrous fine lady of a daughter about the house a man has to mind his p's and q's. Mr. Verners was a sort of a gentleman and he minded his p's and q's, but he wasn't above admitting that he looked forward to the day when, Dorothy well and truly married, he could relax to reasonable carelessness at home.

And not only did Dorothy not get married, not only did Whitworth procrastinate and play card games in London instead of the love-game in Lancashire, but Dorothy, instead of waiting patiently, became strangely restive. The queer thing is that her discontent began to show itself soon after she had met Reuben Hepplestall riding in the road one day now a year ago. She hadn't mentioned the meeting at home. Why should she mention a creature who was outcast? Why give him a second thought? What possible connection could there be between the meeting and this change in her hitherto entirely submissive habit of waiting for Whitworth? None, to be sure, and no doubt Luke was perfectly right when he said it was all the vapors.

"But the vapors," said Mrs. Verners, "come from Sir Harry's absence."

And "Tush," said Mr. Verners, who was not without his envious sympathy of that rich bachelor in London, and there, for that time, they left it.

But the vapors came again, they turned endemic while Sir Harry continued a parishioner of St. James', a gay absentee from his estates and his plain duty of marrying Dorothy, and Mr. Verners' sympathy wore thin. A tolerant man, but a daughter who (he held) moped and a wife

who (he told her in set terms) nagged, played the deuce with his tolerance and so, finally, against his better judgment, they were come to London, "To dig the fox out of his earth," he said. "Aye, but do you fancy the fox will relish it?"

He knew how he, in the character of fox, would have received this hunt. "But we come naturally to London, for clothes for Dorothy and me," said Mrs. Verners.

"Do we?" he growled. "It's heads I win and tails you lose every time with a woman. What the hangment do I get except an empty purse?"

If the gods smiled, he got rid of Dorothy, but that wasn't to be emphasized now any more than was his very firm intention to spend on himself the lion's share of the contents of that purse. These things were not to be mentioned because it was good to have a grievance against his wife, to throw responsibility for their enterprise on her shoulders, to seem wholly, when he was only half, convinced that they were doing an unwise thing.

"Dorothy must come to London sometimes," said Mrs. Verners placidly, "and Sir Harry is hardly to be reminded by letter of his negligence, whereas the sight of Dorothy—"

"Well, well," said Luke, "you're proud of your poppet." Secretly, he would have backed the looks of his daughter against those of any woman in the land. "But," he went on, "we're in London now, and London's full of pretty women. Your wench may be the pride of Lancashire, but you're pitting her here against the full field of the country—"

"Mr. Verners, you are vulgar."

"I'm stating facts," he said. "We're here to catch Whitworth and I am indicating to your woman's intelligence and your motherly prejudice that the bait you're

offering may not look so juicy here as it did at home where it hadn't its peer."

So he insured himself against failure, and the particular source of his ill-humor as he prepared to go out on the day after their arrival in town was not mental but physical. To jam gouty feet, used to roomy riding boots, into natty gear ought to be nothing. In the past it had been nothing, when he had drunk in the London air and found it the well of youth, but, this time, remarkably, the boots pinched unforgettably, and the realization that he hadn't the resilience of youth, that he was in London yet hipped, in a play-ground yet grave, disheartened Mr. Verners, and it wasn't till that skilled diplomat, the porter at Almack's, recognized him instantly with a salute that Mr. Verners felt petulance oozed from him. It was a wonderful salute; it indicated the porter's joy at seeing Mr. Verners, his regret that Mr. Verners was only an occasional visitor, his personal feeling that, but for the occasional visits of Mr. Verners, the life of the porter of Almack's Club would not be worth living; it welcomed him home with a captivating, deferential flattery and the mollified gentleman was to meet with further balm inside the club, where play was not running spectacularly high and there were idle members eager for the simple distraction to be had from any face not wearisomely familiar. Besides, Mr. Verners came from Lancashire; London had heard of Lancashire recently and was willing to hear more.

He came in without much assurance, but hesitation fled when he found himself the center of an interest not at all languid.

"Damme, it's Luke Verners come to town. Business for locksmiths here," was the coarse-witted welcome of a lord.

"Locksmiths?" asked Verners.

"Ain't it locksmiths one employs to put bolts and bars on one's wife's bedroom?"

"You flatter me, my lord," said Verners.

The dandy eyed him appraisingly. "Perhaps I do, Verners, perhaps I do. You are past your prime."

"Does your lordship care to give me opportunity to prove otherwise, with pistols, swords or—her ladyship?"

A hot reception? Music in the ears of Mr. Verners, who relished it for its coarseness, for what seemed to him the authentic note of London Town, a greeting spoken propitiously by a lord. And if this was a good beginning, better was to follow. Mr. Seccombe rose from the chair where he was drowsing, recognized Verners with a start and came up to him interestedly. "Rot your chaff, Godalming," he said. "Verners will give you as good as he gets any day. Tell us the news of the North, man. Are things as queer as they say?"

"What do they say?" asked Luke.

"They speak of steam-engines."

"Oh, Lord," groaned Godalming. "Old Seccombe's on his hobby-horse."

"Of steam-engines," repeated Mr. Seccombe severely, "and of workers whose bread is taken out of their mouths by machinery, so that they are thrown upon the poor-rates that the landlords must pay."

"Gospel truth, Mr. Seccombe," said Luke feelingly, "and yond fellow Arkwright, that began it, made a knight and a High Sheriff for doing us the favor of ruining us. What's the country coming to?"

"Corruption and decay," said his lordship.

"Is that so sure?" queried Seccombe. "What is your word on that, Verners?"

"Beyond doubt, it is the end of all things when landlords are milked through the poor-rates," said Luke.

"Yet steam would appear to have possibilities?"

"Oh, Seccombe's a hopeless crank," said Godalming.

"Possibilities for whom, Mr. Seccombe?" asked Verners.
"For a barber like this Arkwright? Yes, he throws on
steam, but what is that to us? Will steam grow
corn?"

"Steam is an infamy," stated a gentleman called Collinson. "You do not agree, Seccombe? No, why should you? You own houses in London. Easy for you to play the philosopher. Those of us with land are beginning to watch the trading classes closely, and steam has the appearance of an ally to trade and enemy to us."

"Then let the alliance be with us, Mr. Collinson," said Seccombe. "Indeed, I am making no original suggestion. We have had the cases mentioned here of more than one man of our own order who—"

"Traitors! Outcasts!" cried Godalming.

"Or, perhaps, wise men, my lord. I do not know."

"You don't know if it is wise to sell your soul to the devil?"

"Personally," said Mr. Seccombe, "I should regard that transaction as precarious, but not to the present point. There was mentioned the example of one Hepple-stall."

"You have heard of him—here?" Mr. Verners was astonished.

"We were interested to hear," said Mr. Collinson.

"Of a perversion," said Godalming.

"Godalming withholds from Mr. Hepplestall the light of his approval," said Mr. Seccombe, "but—"

"Approve a turn-coat that was once a gentleman? Why, he has dined at Brooks' and now blacks his sweaty hands with coal. Is there defense for him?" asked Godalming.

"I am prepared to defend him," said Seccombe.

"Then you're a Jacobin." Godalming turned an outraged back.

"Verners will correct me if I am wrong," said Collinson, "but we hear of Mr. Hepple stall that he has a great steam-driven factory, with a small town at its feet, and by his steam is driving out of trade the older traders in his district. Is that true?"

"Entirely," said Mr. Verners, "though it staggers me that news of so small a matter has traveled so far and so fast."

"Some of us have our eyes on steam," said Seccombe, "and some of us," he eyed Godalming with severity, "some of us prefer that a power like steam should be in the hands of men of our order."

"But they cannot be of our order," protested Verners, scandalized. "They cease, of their own conduct, to be of our order."

"You do not dispute the facts about Hepple stall?"

"No. It's your conclusions I find amazing."

"Oh," said Godalming, "this isn't Almack's Club at all. We're in France, and Mr. Collinson is wearing a red cap, and Mr. Seccombe has no breeches and—rot me if I ever expected to hear such damned revolutionary sentiments from an Englishman."

"Will you do me the favor, my lord, to consider the picture Mr. Verners has assented to be veracious?" Mr. Seccombe said, leaning back in his chair and looking like nothing so much as Maclise's Talleyrand in the Fraser Portraits; elbows on the arms of his chair, hands caressing his stomach, knees wide apart, the sole of one shoe rubbing against the other, a look of placid benignity on his face. "That large factory, dominating a town of cottages where its workers live, under the owner's eye, and that owner a gentleman who has extinguished the small lower-class manufacturers of his neighborhood. I

ask you to consider that picture and to tell me what there is in it that you feel undesirable. To me, my lord, it is an almost feudal picture. The Norman Keep, with a village clustered around its walls, is to my mind the precedent of Mr. Hepplestall's factory with its workers in their cottages about it. I confess to an admiration of this Hepplestall, whom you regard as a traitor to our order and I as a benefactor to that order. You will hardly assert that our order is unshaken by the deplorable events in France, you will hardly say that, even before that unparalleled outbreak of ruffianism, our order had maintained the high prestige of the Feudal days. A man in whose action I see possibilities of restoring in full our ancient privileges is a man to be approved and to be supported by us. If we do not support him, and others like him, what results? Abandoned by us, he must consort with somebody and he will consort naturally with other steam-power manufacturers, adding to their strength and weakening ours. It seems to me that this steam is a notable instrument for keeping in their places those classes who might one day follow the terrible French example: and the question is whether it is better for us ourselves, men of our order, directly to handle this instrument, or whether we are to trust it in the hands of the manufacturing class. For my own part, I distrust that class, I like a man who grasps his nettles boldly and I applaud Mr. Hepplestall."

Several men had joined the circle by now, and Mr. Seccombe ended to find himself the center of an attention close but hostile. Phrases such as "rank heresy" and "devil's advocate" made Mr. Collinson feel heroic when he said, "Speaking for myself, I stand converted by your argument, Seccombe."

At which Godalming gave the theorist and his supporter the name of "a brace of begad trucklers to Satan,"

and such a whoop of applause went up as caused Mr. Seccombe to look round quickly for cover. It was clear that to touch steam was not condoned as an attempt to revitalize the Feudal system: to touch steam was to defile oneself and to propose a defense of a gentleman who stooped to steam was to be unpopular. Mr. Seccombe liked his views very well, but liked popularity better and, catching sight of Whitworth in the crowd, saw in him a means of distracting attention from himself.

"Have you a word on this, Whitworth?" he asked.
"You come from Lancashire."

"My word on this," he said, "is Mr. Verners' word. Like him I am the victim of these steaming gentlemen, and I have only to remember my bailiff's accounts to know how much I am mulcted in poor-rates."

"Imagine Harry Whitworth perusing an account!" said Godalming.

"One has one's duties, I believe," said Sir Harry. "But I have been too long away from Lancashire to be a judge of this matter. I can tell you nothing of Hepple-stall and his factory, for this is the first I heard of it, but I can tell you of Hepple stall and a parson." And he told the tale of Mr. Bantison.

"This is the stuff your hero is made of, Seccombe," jeered Godalming.

"Not bad stuff," Seccombe heard an unexpected ally say. "The stuff, as Seccombe put it, that grasps a nettle firmly."

"Oh," conceded Sir Harry, "Bantison was nettle enough. But as to steam—!" He shrugged his shoulders, and gave Mr. Seccombe the opening for which he angled.

"It does not appeal to you to go to Lancashire and better Hepple stall's example?" he asked blandly.

"Good God!" said Sir Harry, and the Club was with him.

"There might be wisdom in a visit to your estates," said Mr. Seccombe, and the Club was, vociferously, with him. Mr. Seccombe smiled secretly: he had, gently but thoroughly, accomplished his purpose of turning the volatile thought of the Club away from his argument. He had raised a laugh at Whitworth's expense, a brutal laugh, a "Vae Victis" laugh: he had focused attention on the case of Sir Harry Whitworth.

It was not an unusual case. This society had a leader known, with grotesque inappropriateness, as the First Gentleman in Europe and the First Gentleman in Europe had invented a shoe-buckle. Whitworth tripped over the buckle; he criticized it in ill-chosen company and news of his traitorous disparagement was carried to the Regent. Whitworth was in disgrace.

The usual thing and the discreet thing was to efface oneself for a time, but Harry Whitworth had the conceit to believe himself an ornament that the Prince could not dispense with. He stayed in town, daily expecting to be recalled to court: and the frank laughter of Almack's was a galling revelation of what public opinion thought of his prospects of recall.

It was a humiliation for a high-spirited gentleman, and an embarrassment. To challenge a Club was to invite more ridicule, while to single out Mr. Seccombe, the first cause of his discomfiture, was equally impossible; Seccombe was too old for dueling; one did not go out with a man old enough to be one's grandfather. There was Godalming, but, again, he feared ridicule: Godalming's special offense was that he laughed loudly, but Godalming habitually laughed loudly and one couldn't challenge for insulting emphasis a man who was naturally emphatic.

Whitworth saw no satisfactory way out of it, till Verners, mindful of Dorothy, supplied an opportunity for retreat.

"I may be able to give Sir Harry some little information about his estates. They are in good hands, and though naturally we in Lancashire would welcome amongst us the presence of so notable a landowner, the estate itself is well managed by his people." Which was quite a pretty effort in tact from one unaware of Sir Harry's misfortune, and puzzled by the laughter.

Whitworth snatched at the opportunity, meager as it was. "I will come with you to hear of it, Verners." Then as he turned, a feeling that he was making a poor show of it tempted him to say, "Gentlemen, I heard you laugh. Next time we meet, next time I visit Almack's, the laugh will be upon the other side. Godalming, will you wager on it?" He could issue that simulacrum of a challenge, at any rate. Men betted upon anything.

"A thousand guineas that you never come back," suggested Godalming.

"A thousand that I am back—back, you understand me—in a month."

"Agreed," said Godalming. "I back Prinny's resolution for a thousand for a month."

"Shall we go, Mr. Verners?" said Sir Harry to the mystified squire, and "Gad, they're betting on a weather-vane," murmured Mr. Seccombe in the ear of his friend, Mr. Collinson.

CHAPTER V

SIR HARRY WOOS

TO know one's duty and to do it are often different things. Sir Harry's duty, as he knew, was to regard his wild oats as sown, to marry Dorothy, and to go home quietly to Lancashire. In London, he competed on equal terms with men far richer than himself at a pace disastrously too hot for his means, but the competition had been, socially, a triumph for him and to go back now of all times, when temporarily he was under a cloud, was a duty against which his pride fought hard.

He hadn't compromise in him and compromise, in this case was unthinkable. It was either Lancashire with Dorothy, or London without her. Dorothy in London was not to be thought of: no countrybred wife for him unless on the exceptional terms of her bringing him a great fortune, and what she was to bring was well enough in Lancashire but a bagatelle to be lost or won at hazard in a night in London. Decidedly, she would be a blunder in London: if a man of his standing in society put his head under the yoke, it had to be for a price much greater than Dorothy could pay. He would lose caste by such a marriage.

There remained the sensible alternative, the plan to be good and dutiful, to abandon London, ambition, youth, and to become a dull and rustic husband. Long ago, his father and Luke Verners had come to an understanding on the matter, eminently satisfying to themselves, and he

had let things remain, vaguely, at that. Certainly he broke no promise of his own making if he avoided Dorothy for ever: and here he was going under escort (and it seemed to him a subtly possessive escort) of Luke Verners to call on Dorothy, to, it was implied, clarify the situation and, he supposed, to declare himself. Well, that was too cool and however things happened they were not going to happen quite like that. He didn't mind going to survey Dorothy: indeed, Almack's being closed to him just now by his own action, he must have some occupation; but this Dorothy—positively he remembered her obscurely through a haze of other women—this Dorothy must needs be extraordinary if she were to reconcile him to a duty he resented. It might be necessary to teach these good people their place. Luke seemed to Sir Harry uninstructed in the London perspective and in the importance of being Whitworth.

It was unfortunate that Mrs. Verners clucked over him like a hen who has found a long-lost chicken. Her inquiries after his health seemed to him even more assured in their possessiveness than Luke's attitude of a keeper. Mrs. Verners was the assertion of motherhood, and on every score but that of hard duty, he was prepared to deprecate Dorothy, when she came in, to the limits of justice and perhaps beyond them. Dorothy might be a miracle, but Mrs. Verners as a mother was a handicap that would discount anything.

Then Dorothy came in, carrying in her arm a kitten with an injured paw. From her room she had heard it crying in Albemarle Street, had run out and for the last ten minutes had been doctoring it somewhere at the back of the house. Mrs. Verners was alarmed: Dorothy was still flushed with running, or, perhaps, with tenderness; her hair was riotous; she was thinking of the kitten, she had the barest curtsey for Sir Harry, she was far from

being the great lady her mother would have had her in this moment of meeting with him. And he incontinently forgot that he was there on a sort of compulsion, he nearly forgot that it was his duty to like her. Emotionally, he surrendered at sight to a beautiful unkempt girl who caressed a kitten and, somehow, brought cleanliness into the room. "Good God!" said Sir Harry, his manners blown to pieces along with his hesitations by one blast of honesty.

If they could have been married there and then, it was not Whitworth who would have been backward. All that was best in him was devotedly and immediately hers, and that best was not a bad best either: if he could forget London and his craving to be a figure in the town, a courtier and a modish rake, he had the making of a faithful husband to such a woman, satisfied with her, with country sports and the management of his estate, a good father, and a hearty, genial, eueptic, hard drinking but hard exercising representative of the permanent best in English life—the outdoor gentleman.

If he could forget—and just now he utterly forgot, with one swift backward glance at London women. What were they to her? Dressmakers' dummies, perruquiers' blocks, automata directed by a dancing-master, cosmetical exteriors to vanity, greed, vice, if they were not, like some he hated most, conceited bluestockings parading an erudition that it didn't become a woman to possess. Whereas, Dorothy! He felt from her a whiff of moorland air, and a horse between his legs and the clean rush past him of invigorating wind and all the zest of a great run behind the hounds with the tang of burning peat in his nostrils and the scent of heather coming down from the hills. It wasn't quite—it wasn't yet, by years—the case of the roué worn by experience who seeks a last piquant emotion in religion or (what seems to him almost its

equivalent) in a fresh young girl, but his situation had those elements, with the added glamor of discovering that his duty was not merely tolerable but delicious.

"Good God," he said again, quite irrepressibly in the spate of his emotion, then realizing that he was guilty of breach of decorum, lapsed to apologetic amenities from which they were to gather that his ejaculations referred to the kitten.

His polite murmur roused Dorothy to self-consciousness. "What a hoyden Sir Harry must be thinking me," she said confusedly.

"They are wrong," said Sir Harry, "who call red roses the flower of Lancashire. That flower is the wild heather. That flower is you."

"Yes," said Dorothy with whimsical resignation, "the commonest flower that blooms."

"But a rarity in London," he said, "and, bloom like yours, rare anywhere. In London, Madam, we have a glass-house admiration for glass-house flowers that wilt to ruin at a breath of open air. I have been guilty of the bad taste to share that admiration. I have been unpardonably forgetful of the flower of Lancashire." And he bowed to Dorothy in as handsome apology as a laggard lover could make. "We heard a word at the club, Mr. Verner's, which, as you observed, had the faculty of annoying me. It annoyed me because in a club one thinks club-wise and club-wisdom is opaque. I should not be annoyed now."

"Are we to know what the word was?" asked Mrs. Verner's not too discreetly.

Sir Harry raised his eyebrows slightly. Decidedly, he thought again, a clucking hen, but his management of her could wait: this was his hour of magnanimity. "At the club, Madam," he said, "we were allowed to hear a Mr. Seccombe recommending me to visit my estates." Sir

Harry looked at Dorothy. "And it is in my mind that Seccombe counseled well."

Considering the man and remembering the wager with Godalming, that was an admission even more handsome than his apology. It fell short, but only short, of actual declaration and perhaps that might have come had not Mrs. Verners attempted to force a pace which was astonishingly fast. She saw her expedition turning in its first engagement to triumphant victory, but she wanted the spoils of victory, she wanted a spade to be called unmistakably a spade, she wanted his declaration in round terms before he left that room.

"We are to see you back in Lancashire?" she said insinuatingly.

Sir Harry shuddered at her crude persistence, but, gallantly, "I have good reason to believe so," he replied, scanning the reason with an admiration qualified now by wonder if she would become like her mother.

"And you will come to stay?"

"That I cannot say," he was goaded to reply. Damn the woman! She was arousing his worst, she was reawakening his rebellion to the thought that he had had his fling, she was tempting him to continue it in the hope that when his fling was ended, Mrs. Verners would have, mercifully, also ended. He took his leave with some abruptness, treading a lower air than that of his expectancy.

But Dorothy held her place with him. For wife of his, this was the one woman and Mrs. Verners, in retrospect, diminished to the disarmed impotence to hurt of a spikeless burr.

He weighed alternatives—Dorothy, heather, the moors, domesticity, estates, his place in the county against the stews of St. James, the excitement of gambling on a horse, a prizefighter or the dice, the hot perfumes of balls,

Ranelagh, the clubs, women. He even threw in Prinny and his place at Court, and against all these Dorothy, and what she stood for, held the balance down. He formed a resolution which he thought immutable.

He assumed, and Mrs. Verners had fed that assumption, that there were to be no difficulties about Dorothy and, fundamentally, she meant to make none. She had looked away from Hepplestall when she met him on a road, and many times since then she had looked back in mind to Hepplestall, but Sir Harry was her fate and she did not quarrel with it. He had, though, been bearishly slow in accepting her as his fate and she saw no reason in that to smooth his passage to the end now that, clearly, he was in the mood to woo. His careless absence had been one long punishment for her: let her now see how he would take the short punishment of being impaled for a week or two on tenterhooks about her.

He came again, heralded by gifts, with hot ardor to his wooing. He brought passion and buttressed that with his self-knowledgeable desire to force the issue, to make a contract from which there could be no retreat: and thereby muddied pure element with lower motive. He complimented her upon a new gown.

"It pleases you?" she asked.

"Much less than the wearer."

"You are a judge of ladies' raiment, are you not, Sir Harry?"

"No more than becomes a man of taste."

"One hears," she said, "of Lady Betty Standish who was at choosing patterns with her dressmaker, and of a gentleman shown into the room that chose her patterns for her, and of the bills that Lady Betty sent to the gentleman, and of how he paid them."

"You have heard of that?" he said. "Well, there are women in town capable of such bad taste as that."

"The bad taste of allowing you to choose her gowns? But were you not competent to choose?"

"The bad taste," he said, "of sending the bills to me. Would you have had me decline to pay them?"

"Again," she said, passing no judgment, "there is a story of a merchant that lived in Hampstead and drove one night with a plump daughter in a coach to eat a dinner in the City. The coach was stopped on the Heath by a highwayman who wanted nothing of the merchant, but was most gallant to his daughter."

"I kissed the girl," said Sir Harry. "It was done for a wager and I won it. A folly, and a harmless one," but he wondered, if she had heard of these, if there were less innocent escapades that she had heard of. There was no lack of them, nor, it appeared, of babblers eager to gossip, to his disservice, about a man on whom the Regent frowned.

"One hears again," she said, "that at Drury Lane Theater,"—he blushed in good earnest: would she have the hardihood to mention a pretty actress who—? and then he breathed again as she went on—"there was once an orange wench—"

"That was a bet I lost," he said. "I was to dress as a woman and stand with my basket like the rest, and I was not to be identified. I was identified and paid. But what are these but the freaks we all enjoy in London? Vain trifles, I admit it, in the telling. Not feasts to boast of, not incidents that I take pleasure in hearing you refer to, but, I protest, innocent enough and relishable in the doing."

"Perhaps," she said. "And while you relished them in London, did you give thought to what I did at home?"

"You? To what you did? What did you do?" Sir Harry was flabbergasted at her question.

"I was at home, Sir Harry." She spoke without bit-

terness, without emphasis, and when he looked sharply at her, she seemed to interpret the look as an invitation and rose. "My mother, I think, is ready to accompany us if you care to take me walking in the Park."

Decidedly a check to a gentleman who proposed to make up for past delays by a whirlwind wooing. She was at home, while he ruffled it in London. And where else should she be? What did she imply? At any rate, she had embarrassed him by the unexpectedness of her attack. Of course she was at home, and of course he was a reveler in London. He was man, she woman, and he hoped she recognized the elementary distinction. Whatever her object, whether she had the incredible audacity to accuse him—him, open-handed Harry—of something only to be defined as meanness, or whether she was only being witty with him, she had certainly discouraged the declaration he came to make.

Mrs. Verners found him a moody squire of dames in the Park, while his sudden puzzlement gave Dorothy a mischievously happy promenade. He brought them, after the shortest of walks, to their door.

"You have been very silent, Sir Harry," Mrs. Verners told him, with her incurable habit of stating the obvious. "Are you not well to-day?"

"Perfectly, I thank you, Madam."

"Oh, Lud, mother, it is but that you do not appreciate Sir Harry's capacity for disguise. In the past, he has been—many things. To-day we are to admire him in the character of a thunderstorm."

"Indeed?" he said. "Thunderstorms break."

"But not on me," said Dorothy, and ran into the house.

Sir Harry turned away with the scantest bow to Mrs. Verners. This was a new flavor and he wanted to taste it well, to make sure that he approved a Dorothy who

could be a precipitate hoyden rushing out-of-doors to an injured kitten and a woman of wit that stabbed him shrewdly. She had variety, this Dorothy ; she wasn't the makings of a dull, complacent wife. Well, and did he want dullness and complacency? He was going to Lancashire, to a life that a Whitworth must live as an example to others: there was to be nothing to demand a wife's complacency. And as to dullness, heaven save him from it—and heaven seemed, by making Dorothy Verners, to have answered that prayer. He decided to be more in love with Dorothy than before—which, as she wasn't willing to fly into his arms when he crooked a beckoning finger, was only natural; and went into a shop from which he might express to her the warmth of his sentiment at an appropriate cost. She should see if he was mean!

In the shop he found my Lord Godalming who was turning over some bright trinkets intended for a lady who was not his wife. Godalming was surly, eyeing Whitworth as he called for the best in necklaces that the shopman had to show. "Oh, yes," said his lordship, "bring out the best for Sir Harry Whitworth. Jewels for Sir Harry and paste for me. I am only a lord."

"What's put you out, Godalming?"

"Ain't the sight of your radiant face enough to put me out? I hate happiness in others."

"Then I can offer you the consolation of knowing that my happiness will not be visible to you long. I propose very shortly to go North, my lord, and to stay there."

Godalming flopped back against the counter like a fainting man who must support himself and, indeed, his astonishment was genuine enough. "Go North?" he gasped. "Are you gone stark mad?"

"I have flattered myself to the contrary," said Sir Harry, with complacency. "I have believed that I have recovered my senses."

"Rot me if I understand you," said his lordship.

"Yet you find me in the article of choosing a necklace."

"Damme, Whitworth, are there no women nearer than the North Pole? Is there no difference between gallantry and lunacy?"

"I am thinking of marriage, my lord."

"Oh, Lud, yes, we've all to come to that. But we don't come to it happily. We don't think of it with our faces like the August sun. I'm the last man to believe your smirking face covers thoughts of marriage. I know too well what it does cover."

"Indeed? And what?"

"What? Burn me if you are not the most exasperating man alive. Have you no recollections of a wager?"

"I am bound to make you an admission, Godalming. Occupied with other matters, I had for the moment forgot our wager. But you need have no fears. I pay my debts."

"Pay? Where in the devil's name have you been hiding yourself if you don't know you've won the wager?"

"Won it?" cried Sir Harry.

"What else are you happy for?"

"I give you my word I did not know of this, Godalming."

"The news has been about the town these last two hours. A courier has ridden in from Brighton summoning you to Prinny's table to-morrow. He is tired of his shoe buckle and vows that you are right about it. They say he wrote you the recall with his own gouty hand. There's condescension, damn you, and you let me be the one to tell you news of it, me that loses a thousand by it!"

"I have been some hours absent from my rooms," apologized Sir Harry. "But this! This!" And if his face glowed before, it blazed now in the intoxication of a great victory. He wasn't thinking of the wager he had won,

and still less of the lady who was his to win: he was thinking of a fat, graceful, capricious Prince who used his male friends as he used his female, like dirt, who drove a coach with distinction and hadn't another achievement, who had taken Harry Whitworth back into a favor that was a degradation; and Harry Whitworth thought of his restoration to that slippery foothold as a triumph and a glimpse of paradise! The Regent had forgiven him and nothing else mattered.

He savored it a while, then became conscious of a shopman with a tray of jewels, and of why he came into the shop. He had the grace to lower his voice from Godalming's hearing as he said, "You must have finer ones than these. I desire the necklace to be of the value of one thousand guineas."

He chose, while Godalming bought his pretentious trifle, and gave Dorothy's address. Then, "I believe that I am now entitled to the freedom of Almack's Club, my lord," he said. "Do you go in that direction?" And Godalming, who was not a good loser, was too sensitive to the social ascendancy of the man whom the Regent forgave to decline his proffered company. The wind blowing South for Whitworth, it wasn't desirable that word of Godalming's wagering on its remaining North should be carried to royal ears: he had better, on all counts, make light of his loss and be seen companionably with this child of fortune.

Not to mention the simpler fact that Godalming was a thirsty soul and that such a reversal of fortune as had come to Harry was only to be celebrated with high junketing. Indirectly, in his person of loser of the wager, Godalming was the host and it wasn't proper for a host to be absent from his own table.

Intrinsically, a wager of a thousand guineas was nothing to lift eyebrows at: Mr. Fox once played for twenty-

two hours at a sitting and lost £500 an hour, and the celebration of a victory was what the victor cared to make it. Sir Harry had more than the winning of a bet to celebrate, he had a rehabilitation and proposed to himself the considerable feat of making Almack's drunk. It was afternoon, but any time was drinking time, and only the darkness of mid-winter lasted long enough to cloak their heroic debauchery. Men were not rare who kept their wits and were steady on their legs after the sixth bottle, and why indeed cloak drunkenness at all, if at the seventh bottle a gentleman succumbed? There was no shame in falling in a good fight: the shame was to the shirker and the unfortunate born with a weak head, a puny three-bottle man.

This is to generalize, which, perhaps, is better than a particular description in this squeamish day of the occasion when Harry Whitworth made his re-appearance at Almack's resolved to write his name large in the Bacchanalian annals of the Club. He was to dine in the Pavilion at Brighton with his Royal Highness next night, and, by the Lord, Almack's was to remember that he had come into his own again.

Some crowded hours had passed when the memorialist at the table's head unsteadily picked up a glass and saying mechanically, "A glass of wine with you, sir," found himself isolating from a ruddy haze the flushed face of Mr. Verners.

"Verners!" he cried. "Verners! What's the connection? Dorothy, by Gad! Going Brighton kiss Prinny's hand to-morrow, Verners. Going your house kiss Dorothy's hand to-night. Better the night, better the deed. Dor'thy first, Prinny second. Gentlemen, Dorothy Verners!"

There wasn't more sobriety in the whole company than would have sufficed to add two and two together, and

nobody noticed, let alone protested, when the host reeled from the table, linked his arm in that of Mr. Verners and left the room. Mr. Verners' mind was a blessed blank gently suffused with joy. Incapable of thought, he felt that he had on his arm a prisoner whose capture was to do him great honor. The servants put them tenderly in a coach for the short drive to Albemarle Street.

"I shall call you Father," said Sir Harry, and the singular spectacle might have been observed, had the night been light and the coach open, of an elderly gentleman endeavoring to kiss the cheek of a younger, his efforts frustrated by the jolting of the coach, so that the pair of them pivoted to and fro on their bases like those absurd weighted toy eggs the pedlars sell, and came, swaying in ludicrous rhythm, to the Verners' lodging.

During the afternoon the necklace had been delivered, and if Dorothy was no connoisseur of jewels she was sufficiently informed to know that here was a peace-offering of royal value. She had twitted Sir Harry with his follies, she had watched him draw the right conclusion from her recital of some of them—the conclusion that she represented his preference for such a life to coming, long ago, to where she and duty and she and love were waiting for him—she had mocked him at her door, and had mocked his sullen face when she compared him with a thunder-storm: and she wondered if she had not gone too far, been too severe. Mrs. Verners lectured her unsparingly on her waywardness, and Dorothy inclined to think that she deserved the lecture. Then the necklace came and if a gift like that was not as plain a declaration as anything unspoken could be, Dorothy was no judge, or her mother either. The lecture ended suddenly, turned to a gush of admiration of such magnificence. Harry had won forgiveness, Dorothy decided, and if he came next day in wooing vein it wasn't she who would check his ardor a

second time. One need not be called a materialist because a symbol that is costly convinced at once, when a cheap symbol would be ineffective.

She was ready for Sir Harry, but not for this Sir Harry. The giver of princely gifts should live up to his princedom, not in the sense of His Royal Highness, George, but in the romantic sense. She had been idealizing Harry since the precious token came and he came—like this, lurching, thick-voiced, beastly. True, a gentleman lost nothing of gentlemanliness by appearing flushed with wine before ladies; but there were degrees and this was a condition beyond the most indulgent pale. Old husbands—Mr. Verner is the example—might have no surprises for their wives, but to come a-wooing in his cups was outrage.

Mrs. Verner made an effort. "Dorothy," she whispered, "remember the necklace. Don't be too nice." Dorothy remembered nothing but that this beast that had been a man was reeling towards her, making endearing noises, with the plain intention of kissing her. Her whole being seemed to concentrate itself to defeat his intention: she hit him, and hit hard, upon the face and Sir Harry sat stupidly on the floor. Then, defying her mother with her eye, she remembered the necklace.

His man, undressing him that night, found an exceptional necklace round his neck beneath his ruffles. He thought of Sir Harry and his condition, of the obliterating effect of much alcohol, of theft and of the hanging that befell a convicted thief and, after balancing these thoughts, he stole the necklace. There were no inquiries made.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN WHO WON

IT is said that the Chinese use a form of torture consisting in the uninterrupted dripping, drop by drop, of water on the head of a victim who eventually goes mad. Mrs. Verners, though not Chinese, used a similar form of torture as they drove North from London in the coach, but Dorothy did not go mad under the interminable flow of bitter comment. Instead, she watched the milestones and, as each was passed, made and kept the resolution not to scream, or to jump out or to strike her mother until they reached the next, and so, by a series of mile-long constraints, disciplined herself to bear the whole.

After Mrs. Verners had said that Dorothy was a graceless girl who had made them all into laughing-stocks and an affected prude whose nicety was monstrous, and a conceited, pedantic, prim ignoramus who had the bumptiously expectation that men were saints, and a pampered milksop who had made her unfortunate parents the jest of the town, there really was not much more to say, but the lady had suffered disappointment and did not suffer it silently.

Occasionally, for a change, she turned her batteries on Mr. Verners who, poor man, was paying by an attack of gout for his London indulgences and couldn't sleep the miles away. There was some justice in her attacks on Mr. Verners. He was first cause of Dorothy's conduct to Sir Harry: he had brought Sir Harry home to them that night: he was accessory to their disaster.

"Well, well, but it is over," he said a dozen times.
"But—," and she began again with stupid and stupefying iteration.

Mr. Verners, after a trip to town, was matter apt for stupefaction. It would need days of hard riding on penitential diet at home to sweat the aches out of him, but even while Mrs. Verners was elaborating the theme that all was lost, he was conscious of a reason, somewhere at the back of his mind, for believing that all was not lost. He couldn't dredge the reason to the surface, and he couldn't imagine what grounds for cheerfulness there were, but he felt sure that something had happened in London, or that something had been said in London which offered new hope to a depressed family. For three days he fished vainly in the muddied waters of his recollection for that bright treasure-trove, then, when they were reaching their journey's end and were within a few miles of home, he saw Hepplestall's factory crowning the hill-top, with its stack belching black smoke, and remembered how unexpectedly significant this Hepplestall had loomed in a conversation at Almack's Club.

He didn't at first associate that strange significance of Hepplestall with his sense that he had brought hope with him from London. True, there was this difference between his wife's motives and his—that she had wanted to see Dorothy married to Whitworth, and he wanted to see Dorothy married. Dorothy in any man's home, within reason; but his was the ideal of the father who felt in her presence a cramping necessity to restraint, and, if any man's, why should he think of Hepplestall's in particular, when, since Sir Harry was out of the running, there was a host of sufficiently eligible young men and when now he watched his wife's resentful glare as she looked at that unsightly chimney?

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her at once that

Whitworth was not their only neighbor to be spoken of respectfully, but on second thoughts that had better wait till Dorothy was not present to hear her mother's inevitable first pungencies. He wanted Dorothy married, and it was easy to marry her to almost any bachelor in the county; yet here was Luke Verners settling it obstinately in his mind that Hepplestall was the husband he wished for her. Hepplestall had been heard of in London, which was one wonder, and had been the subject of a serious discussion at a gaming club, which was a greater wonder, and Verners, who had helped to dig the gulf between Reuben and the county, was now considering how the gulf was to be bridged. Was steam atrocious, when it gained a man the commendation of Mr. Seccombe? He recalled Seccombe's comparison of the factory and its surrounding cottages with the feudal chieftain's keep, and as he looked again at Hepplestall's creation, he saw how apt the comparison was, he saw alliance with Reuben as an astute move that might give him footing on the winning side, as, emphatically, a "deep" thing. If steam were a success, it couldn't be an atrocity.

Whether it were atrocity or not, there was no question but that steam, in Reuben's hands, was a success. He was working with a tigerish energy that left no stone unturned in the consolidation of his position. As yet he was a monopolist of steam in the district, but that was an advantage that couldn't last and he meant when he had to meet more up-to-date competition than that of the water-power manufacturers to be impregnably established to meet it. He hadn't time to think of other things—such as women, or the county, or Dorothy Verners or even Phoebe Bradshaw.

Phoebe had borne him a son. Reuben had not decided—he had not had time to decide—but he didn't think that mattered. If he was going to marry her—to silence

her he had promised marriage and, so far as he knew, intended to keep his promise—it was because he had a fondness for her but, beyond that, because he hoped to see the county cringe to his wife, and if it was going to please him to watch them cringe to a Mrs. Reuben Hepplestall who was Peter Bradshaw's daughter, it was going to please him more to watch them cringe to a woman who was the mother of his son before he married her. That was his present view, and because of it he permitted Peter to jog on at his little factory, he didn't starve Peter out of existence as he was starving the other water-power manufacturers of the neighborhood, he wasn't forcing Peter's workpeople into the steam factory by the simple process of leaving them no other place in which to find employment. Peter was privileged, a King Canute miraculously untouched by the tide of progress; but, for the rest of them, for Peter's like who were unprivileged, Reuben was ruthless. He wanted their skilled laborers in his factory, and he undercut their prices, naturally, thanks to steam, and unnaturally, thanks to policy, till he drove them to ruin, filled his factory with their workpeople, sometimes flinging an overseer's job to the manufacturer he had ruined, sometimes ignoring him. He was building a second factory now, out of the profits of the first. He had to rise, to rise, to go on rising till he dominated the county, till the gentry came to pay court to the man they had flouted. That was the day he lived for, the day when they would fawn and he would show them—perhaps with Phoebe by his side—what it meant to be a Hepplestall in Lancashire. In his mine there were hewers of coal, in the factory men, women and children, laboring extravagant hours for derisory pay to the end that Hepplestall might set his foot upon the county's neck.

All this was background; motive, certainly, but motive

so covert beneath the daily need to plan fresh enterprise, to produce cotton yarn by the thousand pounds and cloth by the mile as never to obtrude into his conscious thought at all. This was his interim of building and till he had built securely he could not pause to think of other issues. The county, for example: he wasn't speculating as to where he stood with the county now: the time for the county's attention would come when he stood, a grown colossus, over it and he was only growing yet. He didn't anticipate that the county would make advances at this stage, that to some of them this stage might seem already advanced while to him, with his head full of plans for development, the stage was elementary. He didn't anticipate Luke Verners.

Mr. Verners, diplomat, came into the factory-yard leading a horse which had shed a shoe, and called to a passing boy to know if Mr. Hepplestall were in. Reuben was in, in the office, in his shirt-sleeves, and though Verners did not know this, it was a score for the bridge-builder that Reuben, on hearing of his presence, placed his pen on his desk instead of behind his ear and put on his coat before going out.

"I deem this good fortune and not bad since it happened at your gates, Hepplestall," said Luke. "If you have a forge here, can I trouble you? If not there's a smithy not a mile away." He gave Reuben a choice: his advance was to be accepted or rejected as Reuben decided.

"I have the means to shoe my wagon horses," said Reuben, indicating at once that his was a self-supporting and a trading organization. If Verners cared to have his horse shod on Reuben's premises, the shoeing would be good, but it would bring Luke into contact with trade.

Luke nodded as one who understood the implications. "I shall take it as a favor, Hepplestall," he said, and Reuben gave his orders, then, "I can offer you a glass of

wine," he said, "but it will be in the office of a manufacturer." And the astonishing Mr. Verners bowed and said, "Why not? Although an idle man must not waste your time."

"I turned manufacturer," said Reuben, "not slave," and led the way into the office. Followed amenities, and the implicit understanding that there had never been a breach, that for Hepplestell to set up a factory was the most natural thing in the world and when, presently, his horse was announced to be ready, "When," asked Luke, "are we to see you at dinner, Hepplestell?"

Reuben felt that the olive branch oozed oil. "I have not dined much from home of late," he said, doubtfully.

"Then let me make a feast to celebrate your return."

"To what fold, Mr. Verners?"

"Well," said Luke, "if you are doubtful, let me tempt you. Let me tell you of my wife and of my daughter but new returned from London with the latest modes."

"Thankee, Mr. Verners," said Reuben, "it is not in my recollection that I ever met you face to face and that you did not know me. But it is firmly in my mind that Mistress Dorothy Verners gave me the cut direct."

"I did not know of this," said Luke, truthfully.

"No? Yet she acted as others have acted. You will do me the justice to note that if I find your invitation remarkable, I have reason."

"Then I repeat it, Hepplestell. I press it. Dorothy shall repent her courtesy. I—" (he drew himself up to voice a boast he devoutly hoped he could make good) "I am master in my house."

"No," said Reuben, "No, Mr. Verners, I will not come to dinner when my appearance has been canvassed and prepared for. But I will ride home with you now, if you are willing, and you shall tell me as we go what, besides purchasing the latest modes, you did in London."

Luke was regretting many things, the impulse which brought him riding in that direction and made him loosen a horse-shoe up a lane near the factory, and the cowardice that had prevented his mentioning his intention to Mrs. Verners who had not yet been given an opportunity to look at Reuben Hepplestall through the sage eyes of Mr. Seccombe of Almack's Club. To take Reuben home now was to introduce a bolt from the blue and Mr. Verners shuddered at the consequences. He couldn't trust his wife, taken by surprise, to be socially suave, and Dorothy, whom he thought he could trust, had been rude to Reuben—naturally, inevitably, in those circumstances quite properly, but, in these, how disastrously inaptly! By Luke's reading of the rules of the game, Reuben should have been grateful for recognition on any terms, and, instead, the confounded fellow was aggressive, dictating terms, impaling Mr. Verners on the horns of dilemma. He had said, "If you are willing," but that, it seemed, was formal courtesy, for Reuben was calmly ordering his horse to be saddled.

Had he no mercy? Couldn't he see how the sweat was standing out on Mr. Verners' face? Was this another example like the case of Mr. Bantison of doing what Seccombe admired, of grasping a nettle boldly? Mr. Verners objected to be the nettle, but didn't see how he was to escape the grasp. The grasp of Reuben Hepplestall seemed inescapable.

He committed himself to fate, with an awful sinking feeling that he whose fate it is to trust to women's tact is lost.

"And in London," asked Reuben as they rode out of the yard. "You did?"

Luke chatted with a pitiful vivacity of all the non-committal things he could, while Reuben listened grimly and said nothing. Did ever a sanguine gentleman set

out to condescend and come home so like a captive and a criminal? He had the impression of being not only criminal but condemned when Reuben said, dismounting at Verners' door, "So far I have not found the answer to this riddle, sir. Perhaps it is to be found in your drawing-room?"

Mrs. Verners and Dorothy were to be found in the drawing-room, and if Luke had been concerned about his wife's attitude he might have spared himself that trouble. She gave a little cry and looked helplessly at Reuben as if he were a ghost, and he gave a little bow and that was the end of her. She could have fainted or gone into hysterics or made a speech as long as one of Mr. Burke's and Reuben would have cared for the one as little as the other. He was looking at Dorothy.

"I have brought Mr. Hepplestell home with me," was Luke's introduction.

"And," said Reuben to Dorothy, "is Mr. Hepplestell visible?"

"Perfectly," she said and bowed.

"I rejoice to hear," he said gravely, "of the restoration of your eyesight. You see me better than on a day a year ago!"

"I see you better," said Dorothy, meeting his eye, "because I see you singly," and he had to acknowledge that a spirited reply to his attack. It put him beautifully in the wrong, it suggested that he had permitted himself to be seen by a lady when in the company of one who was not a lady, it implied that the cut was not for him but his companion, that there was no fault in Dorothy but in him who carried a blazing indiscretion like Phoebe Bradshaw into the public road, and that he was tactless now to remind Dorothy of her correct repudiation of him when he paraded an impropriety.

She flung Phoebe to the gutter, she made a debating

point and showed him how easy it was to pretend that he had never been refused recognition. All that was necessary for his acceptance of her point was his agreement that Phoebe was, in fact, of no importance.

And Reuben concurred. "I have to apologize for an indiscretion," he said, deposing Phoebe from her precarious throne, and giving her the disreputable status latent in Dorothy's retort.

So much for Phoebe, whereas he, wonderfully, was being smiled upon by Dorothy Verners. The gracious bow with which she accepted his apology was an accolade, it was a sign that if he was a manufacturer he was nevertheless a gentleman, that for him manufacturing was, uniquely, condoned. But he thought it needful to make sure of that.

"There is a greater indiscretion," he said, "for which I do not apologize. I am a trader and trader I remain, unrepentant, Miss Verners, unashamed."

"I have heard of worse foibles," said Dorothy, thinking of Sir Harry.

But he couldn't leave it at that: he couldn't be light and accept lightness about steam. "A foible is a careless thing," he said. "I am passionate about my steam-engines."

"Indeed, you have a notable great place up there," said Luke.

"It will be greater," said Reuben. "I am to grow and it with me." Then some sense either that he was knocking at an open door or merely of the conveniences made him add, "My hobby-horse is bolting with me, but I felt a need to be definite."

He was not, he meant, to be bribed out of his manufacturing by being countenanced. He wanted Dorothy, but he wanted, too, his leadership in cotton. And Dorothy was contrasting this man's passion with Sir Harry's,

which she took justifiably, but not quite justly, to be liquor, while steam seemed romantically daring and mysterious. She knew what drink did to a man and she did not know what steam was to do. Reuben seemed to her a virile person; she was falling in love with him.

Mrs. Verner, inwardly one mark of interrogation, was taking her cue from the others who so amazingly welcomed a prodigal, swallowing a pill and hiding her judgment of its flavor behind a civil smile. "Does Mr. Hepplestell know that we have been to London?" she asked.

Luke felt precipices gape for him; this was the road to revelations of his motives, but Reuben turned it to a harmless by-path. "So I have heard," he said. "I was promised news of the fashions." And fashions, and the opinions of Mrs. Verner on fashions, gently nursed to its placid end a call of which Luke had expected nothing short of catastrophe. Reuben was sedulously attentive to Mrs. Verner, wonderfully in agreement with her views, and Luke, returning from seeing him to his horse, had the unhoisted satisfaction of hearing her say, "What a pleasant young man Mr. Hepplestell is, after all."

He took time by the forelock then. "His enterprise," he said, "is the talk of the London clubs. We have not been seeing what lies beneath our noses. They think much of Hepplestell in London. They watch him with approval."

"I confess I like the way his hair grows," said Mrs. Verner, and Dorothy said nothing.

While as to Reuben, there is only one word for the mood in which he rode home—that it was religious. Sincerely and reverently, he thanked his God for Dorothy Verner, and to the end he kept her in his mind as one who came to him from God. A miracle had happened—Luke was God's instrument bringing him to that drawing-room

where Dorothy was—and Reuben had a simple and a lasting faith in it.

Not that in the lump it softened him, not that he wasn't all the same a devil-worshiper of ambition and greed and hatred, for he was all these things, besides being the humbly grateful man for whom God wrought the miracle of Dorothy Verners. She was on one side, in her place apart, and the rest was as it had been.

It may be that his conduct to Bradshaw resulted from this religious mood. Religion is associated with the idea of sacrifice and if the suffering was likely to be Peter's rather than Reuben's, Reuben sacrificed, at least, the contemptuous kindliness he felt towards Peter. His first action was to set in motion against Bradshaw the machinery by which he had crushed other small manufacturers out of trade.

In those days, the power-loom had not become a serious competitor of the hand-loom and the hand-weavers chiefly worked looms standing in sheds attached to their cottages or (for humidity's sake, not health's) in a cellar below them; but they used by now power-spun yarn which was issued to them by the manufacturers. Reuben had permitted Peter to go on spinning in his factory: he now sent round to the weavers the message that Peter's yarn was taboo and that if they dealt with Peter they would never deal with Hepplestall. It was enough: the weavers were implicitly Reuben's thralls, for without his yarn they could no longer rely on supplies at all. Peter was doomed. Reuben had not even, as had been necessary at first, to go through the process of undercutting his prices; he had only to tell the weavers that Peter was banned and they had no alternative but to obey.

So far Peter had been allowed, by exception, to remain in being as a factory-owner, which placed him on a sort of equality with Reuben, as a little, very little brother,

and now brotherliness between a Bradshaw and the man on whom Dorothy Verners smiled was a solecism. Reuben could not dictate in other districts—yet—but, in his own, there were to be no people of Bradshaw's caliber able to say of themselves that they, like Hepplestall, had factories. There would be consequences for Phoebe. He did not give them a second thought. They were what followed inevitably from the placing of Phoebe by Dorothy Verners, they were neither right nor wrong, just nor unjust, they had to be—because of what Dorothy had said when she made, lightly, a dialectical score off Reuben.

He left that fish to fry and went (miraculously directed) to dine with the Verners. He dined more than once with the Verners, he was made to feel that he was at home in the Verners house, so that one suave summer evening, after he had had a pleasantly formal and highly satisfactory little tête-à-tête with Luke as they sat together at their wine, he led Dorothy through the great window on to the lawn and found an arbor in a shrubbery. There was no question of her willingness, and it hardly surprised him that there should be none, for he was growing accustomed to his miracle as one grows accustomed to anything.

"Still, there is a thing which puzzles me," he said. "You were in London. Did you see Sir Harry Whitworth there?"

Dorothy made a hole in the gravel with her toe, and the hole seemed to interest her gravely. Then she looked up slowly and met Reuben's eye. "Sir Harry Whitworth is nothing to me," she said.

And he supposed Sir Harry to have proposed and to have been refused, which was broad truth if it wasn't literal fact.

Refused Sir Harry? And why? For him! The miracle increased.

"This is the crowning day of my life," he said. "It is a day for which I lived in hope. I saw this day, I saw you like golden sun on a far horizon. That the day has come so soon is miracle." He took her hand. "Dorothy Vners, will you marry a manufacturer?"

"I will marry you, Reuben," she said, and his kiss was sacramental.

He kissed her as man might kiss an emblem, or the Holy Grail, with a sort of dispassionate passion that was all very well for a symbol or a graven image, but not good enough for Dorothy, who was flesh and blood.

"No, no!" she cried. "Reuben, what are you thinking me? I am not like that."

"Like what?" he said. "I think you miracle."

"Yes, but I'm not. I'm a woman—I'm not a golden sun on a far horizon. I'm nearer earth than that."

"Never for me," he protested.

"Yes, always, please. Oh, must you drag confession from me? I love you, Reuben, you, your straight clean strength. I went in shadows and in doubt, I waded in muddied waters until you came and rescued me. You touch me, and you kiss me now as if I were a goddess—"

"You are my goddess, Dorothy."

"I want us to be honest in our love. You've shown me a great thing, Reuben. You have shown me that there is a man in the world. My man, and not my god, and, Reuben, don't worship me either. Don't let there be fine phrases and pretense between us two."

"Pretense?"

"The pretense that I am more than a woman and you more than a man."

"You are the most beautiful woman in the world."

She was looking at him quaintly. "Yes, if you please," she said. So long as it was admitted she was human, she liked to be lifted in his eyes above the rest of feminine hu-

manity. This was right, this was reasonable, this wasn't the fantastic blossom of love-making that must needs wither in the chilly air of matrimony, this gave them both a chance of not having to eat indigestible words afterwards, of not having to allow in the future that they began their life together in a welter of lies. She was a woman and she was beautiful and it was no more than right that he should think her woman's beauty was unique. "And I've told you what I think of you," she said. "I shall not change my mind on that."

"I shall never give you need," he said, but he was finding this the ultimate surprise of all. "I had supposed that women liked to be wooed."

"I think they do. I'm sure I do, but I'm a plain-dealer, Reuben."

"I find you very wonderful," he said, and kissed her now as she would have him kiss, with true and honest passion that had respect in it but wasn't bleached with reverence—and very sweetly and sincerely, she kissed him back.

That was their mating and she brought it at once from the extravagant heights where he would have carried it, into deep still waters. It came quickly, it was to last permanently. These two loved, and the coming and the lasting of their love had no more to do with reason than love ever has. If Mr. Verners had the impression that he was a guileful conspirator who had made this match, he flattered himself; at the most he had only accelerated it. Inside, he sat looking forward to the quick decline in his table manners which would follow upon the going of Dorothy from his house; outside, two lovers paced the lawn in happiness, and they did not look forward then. To look forward is to imply that one's present state can be improved.

Two months ago, they were in London; two months ago the idea that they should entertain Hepplestall, the manu-

facturer, the gentleman who was, in that tall Queen Anne Verners house which stood on the site of a Verners house already old when the Stuarts came to reign, would have seemed madness; the house itself would fall in righteous anger on such a guest. Now he was coming into the drawing-room with Dorothy's hand in his, accepted suitor, welcomed son. Something of this was in Dorothy's mind as she led him, solemn-faced and twinkling-eyed round the room. On the walls in full paintings or in miniatures, old dead Verners looked at her, and to each she introduced him. "And not one of them changed their color," she announced.

Mrs. Verners had a last word to say. "But there is Tom." Young Tom Verners was with his regiment in the Peninsula.

"Tom!" cried Dorothy. "I'll show you what Tom thinks of this." She raised a candlestick to light the face of her grandfather's portrait on the wall. Tom, they said, was the image of his grandfather who had been painted in his youth in the uniform of a cornet of horse when he brought victory home with Marlborough. She waved the candle and as she knew very well it would, the minx, its flicker brought to the portrait the sudden appearance of a smile. "That," she said, "is what Tom thinks," and Mrs. Verners wept maudlin tears and felt exceedingly content. There was happiness that night in the Verners house.

When he had mounted his horse, and had set off, she came running down the steps after him. "Stop!" she cried. "No, don't get off. Just listen. My man, my steam-man, I love you, I love you," and ran into the house.

In his own house, when he reached it, he found Peter and Phoebe Bradshaw waiting for him, sad sights the pair of them, with drawn, suffering faces and the sense

of incomprehensible wrong gnawing at their hearts. They couldn't understand, they couldn't believe; hours ago they had talked themselves to a standstill, and waited now in silent apprehensive misery.

"Well?" asked Reuben.

"The weavers tell me of an order of yours. I can't believe—there must be some mistake."

"I gave an order."

"But—"

"I gave an order. It closes your factory? Come into mine. You shall have an overlooker's job." Peter was silent. He was to lose his factory, his position, his independence. He who had been master was to turn man again, to go back, in the afternoon of life, to the place from which as young man he had raised himself. What was Hepplestell saying? "You had no faith in steam, Bradshaw. This is where disbelief has brought you. I did not hear your thanks."

"Thanks?" repeated Peter.

"I offer you an overlooker's job in my factory."

"But Reuben," said Phoebe, "Reuben!"

He turned upon her with a snarl. She used his Christian name. She dared! "Reuben!" she said. "The boy. Our boy. Our John?"

"He will be—what—five months old?"

"Yes," she said.

"At five years old, I take children into the factory. Good-night."

CHAPTER VII

THE EARLY LIFE OF JOHN BRADSHAW

ONCE upon a time, a West Indian slave owner was in conversation with three master-spinners and they spoke of labor conditions in the North of England. "Well," he said, "I have always thought myself disgraced by being the owner of slaves, but we never in the West Indies thought it possible for any human being to be so cruel as to require a child of nine years old to work twelve and a half hours a day, and that, you acknowledge, is your regular practice."

That, and worse, was the early life of John Bradshaw, son of Reuben Hepplestall. Peter went into Reuben's factory: he took the meatless bone Reuben contemptuously threw to a dog: he became an overlooker. Once he had been a fighter, when he was raising himself from the ranks into the position of a small factory owner: then contentment had come upon him and fighting power went out of him. Whom, indeed, should he fight? He was not encountering a man but a Thing, a System, which at its first onslaught seemed to crush the spirit of a people.

The later Hepplestalls looked back to Reuben, their founder, and saw him as a figure of romance. The romance of Lancashire is rather in the tremendous fact that its common people survived this System that came upon them from the unknown, that, so soon, they were hitting back at the Thing which stifled life. Capital, unaggravated, had been tolerable; capital, aggravated by steam,

made the Factory System and the System was intolerable.

Reuben might have chosen to make exceptions of the Bradshaws, but he did not choose it. They had to be nothing to the husband of Dorothy Hepplestall, they had to go, with the rest, into the jaws of the System. So Peter lost his liberties and found nothing in the steam machines to parallel the easy-going familiarities between master and man which had humanized his primitive factory. A bell summoned him into the factory, and he left it when the engines stopped, which might be twelve and a half or might be fifteen hours later. He gave good work for bad pay and his prayer was that the worst might not happen. The worst was that Phoebe might be driven with him into the factory, and the worst beyond the worst was that Phoebe's son might be driven with her. So he gave of his best and tried with a beaten man's despair to hold off the worst results of the creeping ruin that came upon his home.

Reuben was guiltless of personal malignancy. He had decided that the Bradshaws must not be favorites, that they must do as others did, which was a judgment, not a spite, and Reuben did not control the system, but was controlled by it. He, like the Bradshaws, must do as others did. He could, of course, have got out: his difference from them was that he could abjure cotton. But he did not do that, and so long as he stayed in, a competitor with other manufacturers, he was obliged, if he would survive commercially, to use the methods of the rest. They may or may not have been methods that revolted him by their barbarity, and it is probable that, even in that callous age, what of the true gentleman was left in him was, in fact, revolted. That is, at least, to be deduced from the completely isolating veil he hung between Dorothy and the factory. His house was the old home of the Hepplestalls, near the factory but not,

like many manufacturers' houses, adjacent to it. It was sufficiently far away for him, practically, to live two lives which did not meet. He was a manufacturer and he was the husband of Dorothy Hepplestall; in the factory one man and at home another, not lying at home about steam because there he never spoke of it, preserving her romantic illusions about his work by keeping her remote from it. She might have had her curiosities, but she loved Reuben, she consented at his will to be incurious and the habit remained. It might have remained even if love had faded, but their love was not to fade. And the county took it that if Dorothy Verners had married a manufacturer, the factory was not to be mentioned before her. In the presence of ladies they did not mention it to Reuben, though, in the bad times, when the poor-rate rose and half the weavers came upon the parish, Reuben was roasted to his face with indignant heat after the ladies had left the table.

He was neither of the best nor of the worst. He was not patriarchal like the Strutts and the Gregs who, while conforming to the System, qualified it with school-houses and swimming baths, nor did he go to the extreme of ordering his people into the cottages he built and compelling them to pay rent for a cottage whether they occupied it or not. He didn't run shops, charging high prices, at which his people had to buy or where they had to take goods in part payment of wages. Such devices, though general, seemed to him petty and extraneous to the factory; but in the factory he was a keen economist and one of the results of the System was that the masters looked on wages not as paid to individuals but to families. That was so much the normal view that a weaver was not allowed to go on the parish unless he proved that his wife and children worked in the mills and that the whole family wage was inadequate for their support.

Phoebe had to go and, when he was old enough, that is to say at five, John also went. The legal age for apprentices was seven—they were workhouse children bound to the master till they were twenty-one—but John was a “free” laborer, so, until the Act of 1819, which made nine years and twelve working hours the minimum, John was “free” to work at five, to be a breadwinner, to add his magnificent contribution to the family wage which kept the Bradshaws from the workhouse.

The factory bell was the *leit motif* of his life, but the Bradshaws had a relic of their past which made them envied. They had a clock, and the clock told them when it was time to get up to go to the factory. Others, clock-less, got up long before they needed and waited in the chill of early morning, at five o'clock, for the door to open. The idea of ringing the bell as a warning half an hour before working hours began had not occurred to any one then, and people rose in panic and went out, cutting short sleep shorter, stamping in snow (or, if snow is sentimental, is it ever particularly joyous to rise, with a long day's work ahead, at five and earlier?), waiting for the doors to let them in to warmth. No one was ever late. The fines made it expensive to be late, and the knocker-up, the man who went round and for a penny or tuppence a week rattled wires at the end of a clothes-prop against your bedroom window till you opened the window and sang out to him—the knocker-up was a late Victorian luxury. In John's day, there was only the factory bell, and one was inside the factory when it rang. The bell was the symbol of the system, irritating the weavers especially, as the power-loom increased in efficiency, and drove more and more of them to the factories. The spinners, indeed, had had the interregnum of the water-factory: it was not, for them, a straight plunge into the tyranny of the system. The old hand-weaver, whose engine was his arms, began

and stopped work at will, which is not to say that he was a lazy fellow, but is to say that he had time to grow potatoes in a garden, to take a share in country sports and, on the whole, to lead a reasonable life: and his wife had the art and the time to cook food for him. When she worked in the factory, she had no time to cook, and there was nothing to cook, either, and if she had worked from childhood, she had never learned how to cook, and there was no need. They lived on bread and cheese, with precious little cheese. They rarely lived to see forty.

John, son of Reuben (though he did not know that), came to the factory at five in the morning and left it, at earliest, at seven or eight at night, being the while in a temperature of 75 to 85°C. As to meal-times, why, adults got their half hour or so for breakfast and their hour for dinner and the machinery was stopped so that was just the time for the children to nip under and over it, snatching their food while they cleaned a machine from dust and flue. Bad for the lungs, perhaps, but the work was so light and easy. John, who was small when he was five, crawled under the machines picking up cotton waste.

There was a school of manufacturers who held, apparently without hypocrisy, that this was a charming way to educate an infant into habits of industry: a sort of work in play, with the cotton waste substituted for a ball and the factory for the nursery. And they called the work light and easy.

John was promoted to be a piecer—he pieced together threads broken in the spinning machines, and, of course, the machine as a whole didn't stop while he did it, and it was really rather skilled work, done very rapidly with a few exquisitely skilled movements: and that was hardly work at all, it was more amusement than toil. Only one Fielden, an employer who, many years later, tried the experiment for himself, found that in following the to-and-

fro movements of a spinning machine for twelve hours, he walked no less than twenty miles! Fielden was a reformer; he didn't call this light and easy work for a child, but others did.

It would happen that—one knows how play tires a child—John would feel sleepy towards evening. He didn't go to sleep on a working machine, or he would have died, and John did not die that way: he didn't go to sleep at all. He was beaten into wakefulness. Peter often beat him into wakefulness, and Peter did it not because he was cruel to John but because he was kind. If Peter had not beaten him lightly, other overseers would have beaten him heavily, not with a ferule, but with a billy-roller, which is a heavy iron stick. John also beat himself and pinched himself and bit his tongue to keep awake. As the evening wore on it became almost impossible to keep awake on any terms: sometimes, they sang. Song is the expression of gladness, but that was not why they sang. And they sang—hymns. It would have been most improper to sing profane songs in a factory.

As to John's home life, he went to bed: and if it hadn't been for Phoebe or Peter who carried him, he would often not have reached bed. He would have gone to sleep in the road, and because he had never known any other life than this, it was reasonable in him to suppose that the life he led, if not right, was inevitable.

He did not suppose it for long. You can spring surprises on human nature, you can de-humanize it for a time, but if you put faith in the permanent enslavement of men and women, you shall find yourself mistaken. Even while John was passing from a wretched childhood to a wretched adolescence, the reaction was preparing, and mutely, hardly consciously at all, he was questioning if the things that were, were necessarily the things that had to be. There was the death of Peter, in the factory, stopping to

live as a machine stops functioning because it is worn out, and there was the drop in their family wages, though John was earning man's pay then. And there was the human stir in the world, the efforts of workers to combine for better conditions, for Trade Unions, for Reformed Parliaments, and the efforts of the ruling classes, qualified by the liberalism of a Peel or the insurgency of a Cobbett, to repress. There were riots, machine-breaking, factory-burning, Peterloo, the end of a great war, peace and disbanded soldiery, people who starved and a panic-stricken Home Secretary who thought there was a revolution.

Most of it mattered very little to John, growing up in Hepplestall's factory, which escaped riot. It escaped not because its conditions were not terrible but because conditions were often more terrible. As employer, Reuben trod the middle way, and it was the extreme men, the brutes who seemed to glory in brutality, at whom riots were aimed. John knew that there were blacker hells than his, which was a sort of mitigation, while mere habit was another. If life has never been anything but miserable, than misery is life, and you make the best of it. One of the ways by which John expected to make the best of it was to marry. He married at seventeen, but when it is in the scheme of things to be senile at forty, seventeen is a mature age. The family wage was also in the scheme of things: the exploitation of children was the basis of the cotton trade: and though love laughs at economics as heartily as at locksmiths, marriage and child-bearing were not discouraged by misery, but encouraged by it. John did not think of these things, nor of himself and Annie as potential providers of child-slaves. He thought, illogically, of being happy.

And, considering Annie, not without excuse. She was of the few who stood up straight, untwisted by the factory, though it had caught her young and tamed her

cruelly. There was gypsy blood in her. She, of a wandering tribe, had been taught "habits of industry," and the lesson had been a rack which, still, had not broken her. It hadn't quenched her light, though, within him, John had the fiercer fire. With him, the signs of the factory hand were hung out for all to see. Pale-faced and stunted, with a great shock of hair and weak, peering eyes, he was more like some underground creature than a man living by the grace of God and the light of the sun—he had lived so much of life by the artificial light of the factory in the long evenings and the winter mornings; but he had a kind of eagerness, a sort of Peeping Tom of a spirit refusing to be ordered off, and a suggestion of wiriness both of mind and body, which announced that here was one whose quality declined obliteration by the System.

Lovers had a consolation in those days. Bone-tired as the long work-hours left them, it was yet possible by a short walk to get out of the town that Hepplestall had made. These two were married, and a married woman had no manner of business to steal away from her house when the factory had finished with her for the day, but that was what Phoebe made Annie do. That was Phoebe's tribute to youth, and a heavy tribute, too. She, like them, had labored all day in the factory and at night she labored in the home, sending them out to the moors as if they were careless lovers still—at their age! Phoebe kept her secret, and she had the sentiment of owing John reparation. It was not much that she could do, but she did this—growing old, toil-worn, she took the lion's share of housework, she set them free, for an hour or so, to go upon the moors. And Annie was grateful more than John. Already, he was town-bred, already he craved for shelter, already the overheated factory seemed nature's atmosphere to John.

She threw herself on the yielding heather, smelling it,

and earth and air in ecstasy, then rolled on her back and looked at the stars. "Lad, lad," she cried, "there's good in life for all that."

"Aye, wench," he said, "there's you."

"Me? There's bigger things than me. There's air and sky and a world that is no beastly reek and walls and roofs."

"It's cold on the moor to-night," he said, shivering.

She threw her shawl about him. "You're clemmed," she said, drawing him close to the generous warmth of her. "Seems to me I come to life under the stars. Food don't matter greatly to me if there's air as I can breathe."

"We're prisoned in yon factory, Annie. Reckon I'm used to the prison. There's boggarts on the moor."

She laughed at his fears. "Aye, you may laugh," he said, "but there was a gallows up here, and boggarts of the hanged still roam."

The belief in witches, ghosts and supernatural visitants of all kinds was a common one and it was not discouraged by educated people who hoped, probably, to reconcile the ignorant to the towns by allowing terrifying superstitions of the country to remain in circulation. But Annie's gypsy strain kept her immune from any such fears: her ancestors had traded in superstition. "And," he went on seriously, "when the Reformers tried to meet on Cronkeyshaw Moor, it's a known fact that there were warlocks seen." What was seen was a body of men grotesquely decked in the semblance of the popular notion of a wizard, with phosphorescent faces and so on. Somebody was using a better way to scotch Reform than soldiers, but the trick was soon exposed and meetings and drillings on the moors were phenomena of the time.

"You make too much o' trouble o' all sorts, John," she said.

"I canna keep fro' thinking, Annie," he apologized.
"I'm thinking now."

"Aye, of old wives' tales," she mocked.

"No. I'm thinking of my grandfer and of Hepple-stall's factory."

"I'm in the air," she said. "That's good enough for me." She was slightly jealous of John, who had known his grandfather. Very soundly established people had known two grandfathers: John had known one, but Annie none. However, he was not to be prevented from speaking his thought.

"I've heard my grandfer tell o' times that were easier than these. He had a factory o' his own—what they called a factory them days. Baby to Hepple stall's it were. I'll show you its ruin down yonder by the stream some day. He's dead now, is grandfer. Sounds wonderful to hear me talk of a grandfer wi' a factory o' his own."

"Fine lot of good to thee now, my lad. I never had no grandfer that I heard on, but I don't see that it makes any difference atween thee and me to-day."

"I'm none boasting, Annie," he said. "I'm nobbut looking back to the times that used to be. Summat's come o'er life sin' then, summat that's like a great big cloud, on a summer's day."

"Well," said Annie, "we've the factory. But there's times like this when I've my arms full of you and my head full of the smell of heather. And there's times like mischief-neet"—that is, the night of the first of May—"and th' Rush-Bearing in August. I like th' Wakes, lad . . . oh, and lots of times that aren't all factory. There's Easter and Whitsun and Christmas." There were: there were these survivals of a more jocund age, honored still, if by curtailed celebrations. The trouble was that the curtailments were too severe, that neither of cakes nor ale, neither of bread nor circuses was there sufficient offset

against the grinding hardships of the factories. Both John and Annie had so recently emerged from the status of child-slavery that the larger life of adults might well have seemed freedom enough; to Annie, aided by Phoebe's sacrifice, to Annie, living more physically than John, to Annie, who rarely looked beyond one short respite unless it was to the next, the present seemed not amiss. Except the life of the roads and the heaths, to which she saw no possibility of return, from which the factory had weaned her, she had no traditions, while he had Peter Bradshaw for tradition. He had slipped down the ladder, and there was resentment, usually dormant, of the fact that he saw no chance to climb again.

"Things are," was her philosophy. "I'm none in factory now, and I'm none fretting about factory and you'd do best to hold your hush about your grandfer, John. His'n weren't a gradely factory."

That was it. She accepted Hepplestall's, while John accepted the habit of Hepplestall's, dully, subterraneously resenting it. She almost took a pride in the size of Hepplestall's. "And," she said, good Methodist as she was, "there's a better life to come."

He had no reply to make to that. The Methodist was the working class religion, as opposed to the Church of the upper classes and, at first, the rulers had seen danger in it, and in an unholy alliance of Methodism with Reform. There was something, but not a great deal in their fear. There was the fact, for instance, that in the Methodist Sunday Schools reading and writing were taught. "The modern Methodists," says Bamford in his "Early Days," "may boast of this feat as their especial work. The church party never undertook to instruct in writing on Sundays." That far, but not much farther, the Methodists stood for enlightenment. Cobbett gave them no credit at all. He said, in 1824, "the bitterest foes of free-

dom in England have been, and are, the Methodists." Annie had "got religion": the sufferings and the hardships of this life were mere preparations for radiant happiness to come, and a religion of this sort was not for citizens but for saints; it gave no battle to the Devil, Steam.

John stirred uncomfortably in her arms. He had an aching sense of wrong, beyond expression and beyond relief. If he tried to express it, his fumbling words were countered by her opportunism and, in the last resort, by her religion. Things were, and there was nothing to be done about them.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LONELY MAN

A MAN with a foot in two camps is likely to be welcomed in neither and to be lonely in his life. The cotton manufacturers had grown rich, they were established, they were a new order threatening to rival in wealth and power the old order of the land interest, and they were highly self-conscious about it. Land had no valid cause to be resentful of the new capitalists. Land was hit by the increase in the poor rates, but handsomely compensated for that by the rise in land values. But a new power had arisen and land was jealous of its increasing influence in the councils of the nation.

Reuben never forgot that he belonged to the old order, was of it, and had married into it. In business affairs, it was necessary to have associations with other manufacturers, but he had no hospitalities at home for them on the occasions when they met to discuss measures of common policy. He entertained them at the factory, he kept home and affairs in separate water-tight compartments, and was loved of none. He was his own land-owner and his own coal-owner, both long starts in the race, and he was at least as efficient and enterprising as his average competitor. A gentleman had come into trade and had made a great success of it. More galling still, he insisted that he remained a gentleman in the old sense, a landed man, "county." Not in words but by actions and inac-

tions which bit deeper than any words he proclaimed his superiority.

And why not? He was superior, he was the husband of Dorothy Hepplestall and it was that fact—the fact that he had married Dorothy and made a success of their marriage—which counted against him with the county far more than his having gone into trade and having made a success of that. They would have welcomed a failure somewhere, and he had failed at nothing. So though he had their society, he had it grudgingly.

He was then driven back, not unwillingly, on Dorothy. She was, for Reuben, the whole of friendship, the whole of companionship, the whole of love; after all, she was Dorothy and certainly he made no complaint that he had no other friends and that he was a tolerated, unpopular figure in society. His days were for the factory, his evenings for Dorothy and their children and, when the children had gone to bed, for Dorothy and his books. Books, though they were not unduly insisted upon in the country districts of Lancashire, went then with gentlemanliness and Reuben was not idiosyncratic, but normal, in becoming bookish in middle-age. In Parliament they quoted the classics in their speeches, and the Corinthian of the Clubs, whatever his sporting tastes, spared time to keep his classics in repair. Bookishness, in moderation, was part of the make-up of a man of taste, and for Reuben it had become a recourse not for fashion's sake but for its own.

Life for Reuben had its mellowness; he had struggled and he had won; he was owner and despot, hardly bound by any law but that of his will, of the several factories contained within the great wall, of a coal-mine, of the town of cottages and shops about. The conditions of labor were the usual conditions and they did not trouble his conscience. Things were, indeed, rather smoother for Hepplestall's workers than for some others; he was above

petty rent exactions and truck shops, as, being his own coal supplier, he could very well afford to be.

What drawbacks there were to his position were rather in matters of decoration than reality, but it was decided proof of his unpopularity in both camps of influence that Hepplestell was not a magistrate. Other great manufacturers, to a man, were on the bench and took good care to be, because administration of the law was largely in the hands of the magistrates and the manufacturers wanted the administration in trusty hands—their own. It was a permanent rebuff to Reuben that he was not a magistrate; there were less wealthy High Sheriffs.

It was a puny irritation, symptomatic of their spite, and it didn't matter much to Reuben, who was sure of his realities, sure, above all, of the reality of Dorothy's love. No love runs smooth for twenty years and probably it would not be love if it did, but only a bad habit masquerading as love, so that it would not be true to say of Reuben and Dorothy that they had never had a difference. They had had many small differences, and in this matter of love what happens is that which also happens to a tree. Trees need wind; wind forces the roots down to a stronger and ever stronger hold upon the earth. And so with love, which cannot live in draughtless hothouse air, but needs to be wind-tossed to prove and to increase its strength. Impossible to be a pacifist in love! Love is a tussle, a thing of storms and calms: like everything in life it cannot stand still but must either grow or decay, and for growth, it must have strife. Sex that is placid and love that is immovable are contradictions in terms. Love has to interest or love will cease to be, and to interest it cannot stagnate.

The children came almost as milestones in the road of their love; each marked the happy ending of a period of stress. They were not results of a habit, but the achieve-

ments of a passion, live symbols of a thing itself alive. These two hearts did not beat all the time as one, and the restlessness of their love was as essential as its harmony.

But the shadow of a difference that might grow into a disaster was being cast upon them. In a way, it was extraneous to their love, and in another way was part and parcel of it. The question was the future of Edward, the eldest son.

Dorothy lived in two worlds, in Reuben and in the county, and Reuben lived in three, Dorothy, the factory and the county. He put the factory second to Dorothy and she put it nowhere. There was a bargain between them, unspoken but understood, that she should put it nowhere and yet he was assuming, tacitly, that Edward was as a matter of course to succeed him as controller of the factory and the mine: of these two he always thought first of the factory and second of the mine.

She might have reconciled herself to the mine. There were Dukes, like the Duke of Bridgewater, who owned coal-mines and her Edward might have gained great honor, like that Duke, by developing canals. But she had not moved with the times about factories, nor, indeed, had the times, that is, her order of the old gentry, moved very far. The Seccombes were still exceptional, the Luke Verners still trimmers, land was still land and respectable, steam was steam and questionable, and it is to be supposed that though the coal of the Duke was used to make steam, coal was land and therefore on the side of the angels, whatever the devils did with it afterwards. Prejudice, in any case, has nothing to do with consistency. She had no prejudice against Reuben's connection with the factory; he was her "steam-man" still, but she did not want Edward to be her steam-son.

Edward himself was conscious of no talent for factory owning and hardly of being the son of a factory owner.

The management of her children's lives was in Dorothy's hands, involving no mention of the factory, and in her hands Reuben was content to leave their lives until his sons had had the ordinary education of gentlemen, until they were down from their Universities. He had not suffered himself as a manufacturer because he was educated as a gentleman and saw no reason to bring up his sons any differently from himself. Throw them too young into the factory, and they would become manufacturers and manufacturers only: he had the wish to make them gentlemen first and manufacturers afterwards.

Edward had ideas of his own about his future, and it came as a surprise to be invited at breakfast to visit the factory one day during vacation from Oxford. Instinctively he glanced, not at his mother, but at his clothes. He was not precisely a dandy, but had money to burn and burned a good deal of it at his tailor's.

"The factory, I said, not the coal-mine," Reuben said, noting his son's impulse. "You have looked at your clothes. Now let us go and look at the first cause of the clothes. As a young philosopher you should be interested in first causes."

"Oh, is it necessary, Reuben?" pleaded Dorothy.

"Sparks should know where the flames come from," said Reuben.

"I have great curiosity to see the factory, sir," said Edward. "I showed surprise, but that was natural. You have hidden the factory from us all as if it were a Pandora's box and if you judge the time now come when I am to see the place from which our blessings come, I assure you I am flattered by your confidence. But I warn you I am not persuaded in advance to admire the box."

Reuben smiled grimly at his hinted opposition. "If you look with sense, you will admire," he said. "Fac-

tories run to usefulness, not beauty. Shall we go?"

They went, and Reuben exhibited his factory with thoroughness, with the zest of a man who had created it, but now and then with the impatience of the expert who does not concede enough to the slow-following thought of the lay mind. Edward began with every intention to appreciate, but as Reuben explained the processes, found nothing but antipathy grow within him.

He breathed a foul, hot, dust-laden air, he hadn't a mechanical turn of mind and was mystified by operations which Reuben imagined he expounded lucidly. Once the thread was lost, the whole affair was simply puzzlement and he had the feeling of groping in a fog, a hideously noisy fog, where wheels monotonously went round, spinning mules beat senselessly to and fro and dirty men and women looked resentfully at him. It seemed to him a hell worse than any Dante had described, with sufferers more hopeless, bound in stupid misery. He was not thinking of the sufferers with any great humanitarianism: they were of a lower order and this no doubt was all that they were fit for. He was thinking of them with disgust, objecting to breathe the same air, revolted by their smells, but he was conscious of, at least, some sentiment of pity. If he had understood the meaning of it all, he felt that he would have seen things like these in true perspective, but he missed the keys to it, was nauseated when he ought to have been interested and his attempted queries grew less and less to the point.

Reuben perceived at last that he was lecturing an inattentive audience. "Come into the office," he said, and in that humbler place, with its great bureau, its library of ledgers and its capacious chairs for callers, where the engine throbbed with a diminished hum, Edward tried to collect his thoughts. "This," Reuben emphasized, "is where I do my work. I go through the factory twice a

day, otherwise, I am to be found in here. A glass of wine to wash the dust out of your throat?"

Edward was grateful: but wine could not wash his repugnance away. "Well, now," asked Reuben, "what do you think?"

"Frankly, sir, I am hardly capable of thought."

"No," said Reuben meditatively. "No. Its bigness takes the breath away."

But Edward was not thinking of bigness. "If I say anything now which appears strange to you, I hope you will attribute it to my inexperience. I am thinking of those people I have seen. To spend so many hours a day in such conditions seems to me a very dreadful thing."

"Work has to be done, Edward, and they are used to it. You will find that there are only two sorts of people in this world, the drivers and the driven." He leaned forward in his chair. "Which are you going to be?"

"I?" The personal application caught him unawares, then he mentally pulled himself together. If he was in for it, he could meet it.

"I did not bring you here as an idle sight-seer. At first blush you dislike the factory, but it is my belief that you will come to like it as well as I do." Edward stared at his father who was, he saw, serious. He veritably "liked" the factory. "In fact," Reuben was saying, "I can go further. I love this place. I made it; it is my life's work; and I am proud of it. Hepplestall's is a great inheritance. When I hand it on to you, it will be a great possession, a great trust. How great you do not know and if I showed you now the figures in those books you would be no wiser. As yet you do not understand. Even out there in the works where things are simple you missed my meaning, but there is time to learn it all before I leave the reins to you."

"I am to decide now?"

"Decide? Decide? What is there to decide? You are my eldest son."

Edward made an effort: Reuben was assuming his consent to everything. "May I confess my hope, sir? My hope was that when I had finished at Oxford, you would allow me to go to the bar."

"The bar? A cover for idleness." Sometimes, but Edward had not intended to be idle. The bar was an occupation, gentlemanly, settling a man in London amongst his Oxford friends; it seemed to Edward that the bar would meet his tastes. If it had been land that he was to inherit, naturally he would have taken a share in its management, but there was no land: there was a factory, and he felt keen jealousy of Tom, his younger brother. It was settled that Tom should follow his uncle, Tom Verners, who was Colonel Verners now, into the Army, while he, the eldest son, who surely should have first choice, he was apparently destined will he, nill he, for this detestable factory!

"I will have no son of mine a loafer. You would live in London?"

"I should hope to practice there."

"I'll have no idlers and no cockneys in my family, Edward. Hepplestall's! Hepplestall's! and he sneers at it."

"Oh, no, sir. Please. Not that. I feel it difficult to explain."

"Don't try."

"I must. I think what I feel is that if we were speaking of land I as your eldest son should naturally come into possession. I should feel it, in the word you used, as a trust. But we are not speaking of land."

Reuben gripped his chair-arms till his hands grew white and recovered a self-control that had nearly slipped away. The boy was ready to approve the law of primogeniture

so long as he could be fastidious about his inheritance, so long as the inheritance was land. As it was not land, he wanted to run away. He deprecated steam. He dared, the jackanapes! "No," said Reuben, "we are not speaking of land. We are speaking of Hepplestall's."

"If it were land," Edward went on ingenuously, "however great the estate, you would not find me shirking my responsibility."

"I see. And as it is not land? As it is this vastly greater thing than land?" Then suavity deserted him. "Boy," he cried, "don't you see what an enormous thing it is to be trustee of Hepplestall's?"

"Oh," said Edward, "it is big. But let me put a case."

"What? Lawyering already?" scoffed Reuben.

"Suppose one dislikes a cat. Fifty cats don't reconcile one."

"You dislike the factory?"

"I may not fully understand—"

"Then wait till you do. Come here and learn."

"That would be the thin end of the wedge."

"It is meant to be," said Reuben, and on that their conversation was, not inopportunely, interrupted. A clerk knocked on the door and announced Mr. Needham. "Don't go, Edward," said Reuben, "this can figure as a detail in your education," and introduced his son to the caller.

Edward looked hopelessly at the visitor. Reuben had told him that the office was the place where his business life was spent and therefore Edward's contacts, if he came to the factory, would not be with the squalid people he had seen at work, but with people who visited the office. He looked at Mr. Needham, and decided that he had never seen a coarser or more brutal man in his life. There were certain fellows of his college justly renowned for grossness; there was the riffraff of the town, there were hangers-on

at the stables, there were the bruisers he had seen, but in all his experience he had seen nothing comparable with the untrammeled brutishness of Mr. Richard Needham. If this was the company he was asked to keep, he preferred—what did one do *in extremis?* Enlist? Well, then, he preferred enlistment to the factory.

Needham was, however, not quite the usual caller, who was a merchant come to buy, or a machinist come to sell, rather than, as Needham was, a manufacturer and a notorious one at that. By this time, the repeal of the Combination Acts had given Trade Unionism an opportunity to develop in the open, and manufacturers who had known very well how to deal with the earlier guerilla warfare of the then illegal Unions were seriously alarmed by its progress. There was a strong movement to force the re-enactment of the Combination Laws. Contemporaneously, the growth and proved efficiency of the power-loom drove the weavers to extremes. Needham was self-appointed leader of the reactionaries amongst the manufacturers: a man who had risen by sheer physical strength to a position from which he now exercised considerable influence over the more timid of the masters.

He had the curtest of nods for Edward. "My God, Hepplestall, we're in for a mort of trouble," he said, mopping his brow with a huge printed handkerchief and putting his beaver hat on the desk. He sank into a stout chair which groaned under his weight, and Edward thought he had never seen anything so indecent as the swollen calves of Mr. Needham.

Reuben silently passed the wine. It seemed a good answer.

Warts are a misfortune, not a crime: but the wart on Mr. Needham's nose struck Edward as an obscenity—and his father loved the factory! He didn't know that he was

unduly sensitive, but certainly Needham on top of his view of the workpeople made him queasy.

Needham emptied and refilled a glass. "I'd hang every man who strikes," he said. "Look at 'em here," he went on, producing a hand-bill which he offered to Reuben.

"After the peace of Amiens," it read, "the wages of a Journeyman Weaver would amount to 2/7½ per day or 15/9 per week, and this was pretty near upon a par with other mechanics and we maintained our rank in society. We will now contrast our present situation with the past, and it will demonstrate pretty clearly the degraded state to which we have been reduced.

"During the last two years our wages have been reduced to so low an ebb that for the greatest part of that time we have . . . the Journeyman's Wages of 9d or 10d a day or from 4/6 to 5/- per week, and we appeal to your candor and good sense, whether such a paltry sum be sufficient to keep the soul and body together."

"What do you think of that?" asked Needham. "Printing it, mind you, spreading sedition and disaffection like that. Not a word about their wives and children all takken into the factories and all takking good wages out. If commerce isn't to be unshackled and free of the attacks of a turbulent and insurrectionary spirit, I ask you, where are we? Where's our chance of keeping law and order when the law permits weavers to combine and yap together and issue bills like yond? It's fatal to allow 'em to feel their strength and communicate with each other without restraint. Allow them to go on uninterrupted and they become more licentious every day. What do you say, Hepplestall?"

"Why, sir, it's you who are making a speech, and I may add a speech containing many very familiar phrases."

"Aye, I've said it before, and to you. I might have

spared my breath. But hast heard the latest? Dost know that the strikers in Blackburn destroyed every power-loom within six miles of the town and . . . and . . ." Mr. Needham drew in breath . . . "and they've been syringing cloth wi' vitriol. Soft sawder in yond hand-bill, 'appeal to your candor and good sense,' aye and vitriol on good cloth when it comes to deeds."

"Yes, I heard of that. A nasty business, though I understand the authorities have dealt strongly with the outbreak."

"Aye, you're a philosopher, because it happened at a distance from you. It's some one else's looms that's smashed, and some one else's cloth that's rotted. What if it were yourn, Hepplestell?"

"We don't have Luddites here."

"You allays think you're out of everything. Now I've brought you the facts and you know as well as I do what's the cause of this uppishness of the lower orders. It's Peel, damn him. One of us, and ought to know better. Sidmouth's the man for my money. Sidmouth and Castlereagh. There was sense about when they were in charge. Now, we let the spinners combine and the weavers combine and they're treading on our faces. Well, are you standing by your lonesome as usual or are you in it with the rest of us to petition against workmen's combinations? That's a straight question, Hepplestell."

"I shall take time to answer it, Mr. Needham. I have acted with you in the past and I have taken leave to doubt the wisdom of your actions and I have on such occasions acted neither with you nor against you. This time—"

"This time, there's no chance of doubt."

"But I do doubt, sir. I doubt whether a factory, controlled by a strong hand, has anything to fear from Workmen's Combinations."

"Damn it, look at Blackburn!"

"You shall have my decision when it is ready. At this moment, I tell you candidly I do not incline to join you."

"But union is strength. They've combined. So must we."

"We always have, in essentials. I promise you I will give this matter every thought."

Needham looked angry, and then a cunning slyness passed across his face. "I'm satisfied with that," he said. "Aye, I'm satisfied, though you may tell me I've come a long road to be satisfied wi' so little at the end o' it."

Reuben rose, bowing gravely. "I am glad to have satisfied you, Mr. Needham," he said, blandly ignoring the hint that an invitation to dinner was the natural expectation of a traveled caller.

"Aye," said Needham, "Aye." He finished the bottle, since nothing more substantial was forthcoming, and rose to go. "Then I'll be hearing from you?"

"Yes," Reuben assured him. "I will see you to your horse."

"Nay, you'll not. They don't breed my make of horse. I've a coach at door, and extra strong, too."

"Then I will see you to your coach." Needham nodded to the silent Edward, and went out with Reuben. There was no strategical issue between Needham and Hepple-stall. Needham, when he spoke, used phrases taken from the writings of manufacturers more literate than himself, and so stated, by such a man, his point of view sounded preposterously obscurantist. But it was, in essence, Reuben's view also, with the difference that Reuben looked on attempts to combat the principle of Unionism as tactical error. The Combination Acts, he felt, had gone for ever, and the common policy of the masters should not be in the direction of reviving those Acts but of meeting the consequences of their repeal.

He was, indeed, habitually averse from open association with his fellow manufacturers because of his self-conscious social difference, and, where such a man as Needham led, was apt to pick more holes in his policy than were reasonable. It was quite likely in the present case that he would come round to Needham's view, but certainly he would not hurry. The troubles at Blackburn were remote from him and he felt his own factory was out of the danger zone, and that if he threw in his weight with the Needham petition it would be altruistically, and perhaps a waste of influence which could have found better employment. His own people were showing no signs of restiveness, and he didn't think Unionism was making much headway amongst them. Reason and self-interest seemed allied with his native individualism to resist Needham's policy.

He returned to find Edward staring gloomily at his boots. "Well, Edward?" he asked cheerily. "Did you like your lesson?"

"The thing I liked, sir, the only thing I liked, is that you are not to act with Mr. Needham."

"Am I not?"

"It did not sound so. Tell me, is that a fair specimen of the type of man you meet in business?"

"No. In many ways he is superior to the most."

"Superior! That fat elephant!"

"Needham is one of the strongest men in the cotton trade, Edward."

"Oh, I called him elephant. Elephants have strength."

"And strength is despicable?"

"No. But—"

"But Needham is a gross pill to swallow. Well, if it will ease your mind, I do not propose to act with him on this issue. You need not swallow this pill, Edward. But I am not looking to a son of mine to be a runaway from duty, to be a loiterer in smooth places. You have Oxford

which is, I hope, confirming you as a gentleman and you have the factory which will confirm you as a man. I could make you an appeal. I could first point out that I am single-handed here in a position which grows beyond the strength of any single pair of hands. I could dub you my natural ally at a time when I have need of an ally. But I shall make you neither an appeal nor a command. Hepplestall's is a greater thing than I who made it or than you who will inherit it, and there is no occasion for pressure. You are, naturally, inevitably, in its service."

Edward felt rather than saw that somewhere at the opening of the well down which this plunged him there was daylight. "I do not perceive the inevitability," he cried. "You doom me to a monstrous fate."

"You are heroical," said Reuben, "but as to the inevitability, take time, and you will perceive it."

"Daylight! Give me the daylight!" was what Edward wanted to say, but he repressed that and hardly more happily he asked, "Is there no beauty in life?"

"There is beauty in Hepplestall's," said Reuben, and meant it. He had created Hepplestall's.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPY

EDWARD'S "fat elephant" drove from Hepplestall's meditating his retort to Reuben's intransigency. He held that it was necessary to weld the manufacturers into a solid phalanx of opposition to the legalizing of Trade Unions, and that if Reuben were allowed to stand out, other masters, whom Needham regarded as weak-kneed, would stand out with him. Needham was obstinate and unscrupulous, with a special grudge against "kid-gloved" Hepplestall, and if there were no overt manifestations of discontent in Hepplestall's factory, his business was to provoke them. There was surely latent discontent there as everywhere else and the good days of Sidmouth and Castlereagh had shown what could be achieved in the way of manufacturing riot by the use of informers. Informers were paid to inform, and lost their occupation if no information were forthcoming; they did not lose their occupation; they were agents provocateurs, and Gentleman Hepplestall was, if Needham knew right from left, to be thwacked into line by the activities of an informer.

He hadn't much difficulty—he was that sort of man—in laying hands upon a suitable instrument. The name of the instrument was Thomas Barraclough, and it was, indeed, in Needham's hands already working as a weaver in his factory, not, to be sure, for the purpose of provoking unrest there but merely for decent spying. There is honesty in spying as in other things and the decent spy

is the observer and reporter of what others do spontaneously; the indecent spy is he who instigates the deeds he afterwards reports. Barracough was quite willing, for a higher fee, to undertake to prove to Hepplestall that Trade Unions were murder clubs.

The affair was not stated, even by blunt Needham to his spy, with quite such candor as this, but, "If tha' sees signs o' trouble yonder, tell me of 'em; and if tha' sees no signs tha's blinder than I tak' thee for," was a sufficiently plain direction to an intelligent spy, and Barracough nodded comprehendingly as he went off to begin his cross-country tramp to Hepplestall's.

A spy who looks like a spy is disqualified at once, but what are the symptoms of spying? What signs does spying hang out on a man that we shall know him for a spy? Is he bent with a life spent in crouching at keyholes? A keen-eyed, large-eared ferret of a man? The fact is that Barracough was small and bent, and ferretty, that he looked like your typical spy and yet did not look, in the Lancashire of those days, any different from a famished weaver. They were "like boys of fifteen and sixteen and most of them cannot measure more than 5 feet 2 or 3 inches."

Steam fastened on this generation, stunting it, twisting it, blasting it, and if Barracough had been reasonably tall, reasonably well-made and nourished he would have been marked at once as something different from the workers who were to accept him as one of themselves. So, in spite of looking like a spy, he was qualified to be a spy in Hepplestall's because he looked like any other undergrown, underpaid, underfed weaver lad.

And there is good in all things, though Hepplestall was not thinking of the Blackburn riots as good when he was cavalier about them with Needham. There was the good, for Hepplestall's, that the destruction of the Blackburn

looms and their products brought an exceptional rush of orders to Reuben; and Thomas Barracough, applying for work when he ended his tramp at the factory gates, found himself given immediate employment.

He found, too, that as an honest spy he had no occupation in this place. He could report distress, sullen suffering and patient suffering; he could report the ordinary things and would have to say, in honesty, that here the ordinary things had extraordinary mitigations; and he found nothing of the violent flavor expected by Needham. It remained for him to take the initiative and to provide against disappointing his master's expectations, but the mental sketch he had made of himself as an effective explosive did not seem likely to be justified in any hurry. The Blackburn riots had not been followed by such ferocity of punishment as had befallen the Luddites a few years previously, but there had been men killed by soldiers during the riots: there were ten death sentences at Lancaster Assizes, reduced afterwards to transportation for life: and thirty-three rioters were sent to prison. That was fairly impressive, as it was meant to be, but much more impressive was the appalling distress which quite naturally fell upon the Blackburn people who had destroyed the looms, and if all this was salutary from the point of view of law and order it was excessively inopportune from the special point of view of Mr. Barracough.

Here he was, under orders to raise tumult, in a place where not only were there no symptoms of tumult, but where those who might possibly be tumultuously disposed were cowed by the tales, many true and many exaggerated, of Blackburn's sufferings. The malignant irony of the uses of the agent provocateur was never better exemplified, but it wasn't for Needham's trusty informer to chew upon that, but, whatever his difficulties, to get on with his incitements. And he soon decided that Hepple-

stall's people, in the mass, were "windbags," that is, they would listen to him and they would, in conversation, be as vehement as he, but their vehemence was in words not deeds and only deeds were of any use to Barracough. The method of the Luddites, machinery-smashing, was discredited for ever by the Blackburn example and he gave up hope of any large-scale demonstration at Hepple-stall's. What was left was the possibility of finding some individual who was capable of being influenced to violent action.

Then, just as he was despairing of finding the rightly malleable material, Annie Bradshaw's second son was born and Annie Bradshaw died. She had been almost luxuriously careful about the birth of her first child: she had left the factory three days before his birth and had not returned, with the child at her breast, for a full week afterwards; but second babies were said to come more easily, wages were needed and she had lifted heavy beams before. The child was born on the factory floor, it lived and Annie died. There was no extraordinary pother made about her death, because women were continually defying steam in this way and most of them survived it. Annie did not survive. She was unlucky. That was all.

"Don't fret for me, lad," she gasped to John. "I'm going through the Golden Gates. Tak' care o' the childer." The engine did not stop—guns do not cease fire because a soldier falls on the battlefield—and to John Bradshaw, nineteen, widower with two infant sons, it beat a devil's tattoo of stunning triumph. There were women gathered around her body, somewhere a woman was washing his son, but he was seeing nothing of them, nothing of the life that had come through death. Annie was gone from him, his glorious Annie of the winds and the moors, lying white and silent on the oily floor of a stinking factory, and already the women were leaving her, already they were re-

turning to their several places. If they gave him sympathy, they took bread out of their mouths and sympathy must be so brief as to appear callosity. It was not callosity, and he knew it; knew, too, that he did not want long-winded condolences or any condolences at all, yet their going so quickly from that white body seemed to him a stark indecency adding to the monstrous debt Steam owed him.

He was thinking of the small profanities of this death rather than of the death itself. He hadn't realized that yet, he was probing his way through the attendant circumstances to the depths of his tragedy. He knew that he would never lie beneath the stars again with Annie while the breeze soughed through the heather and she crooned old songs of the roads in his ear: he knew, but he did not believe it yet. She had been so utterly protective of him. If she took down her hair, and held it from her, and he crept beneath its curious warmth, what had mattered then? He had loved her and by the grace of Phoebe—though he was not thinking of Phoebe now—they had been given leave to love and to enjoy each other in the hours which were not the factory's.

The engine thumped horribly on his ear and a gust of passionate hatred struggled to make itself articulate. "You fiend!" he cried. "Curse you, curse you!"

When an overseer came to tell him that a hand-cart was at the gates to take Annie's body and the baby home, and that Phoebe might go with him, he was lying, dazed, on the floor and mechanically did what he was told to do. He had no volition in him, and Mr. Barraclough, professional observer, noting both his hysteria and his stupor decided that he had found his man at last. Providence had ordained that Annie should die to make an instrument for Richard Needham's emissary.

In the days of her youth, Phoebe had her follies as she had her prettiness; now, schooled by adversity, an old woman of forty, she was without illusions as she was without comeliness; she had nothing but her son, and, hidden like a miser's gold, her hatred of the Hepplestalls, of Reuben who betrayed her, of Dorothy whom he married, of his sons who stood where her son should have stood. For two seconds she was weakened now, for two seconds as she folded Annie's baby in her shawl and held him closely to her she had the thought that she must go to Reuben with a plea for help, then put that thought away.

"Don't worry your head about the chilfer, lad," she said, "I'll manage." She would work in the factory, she would order their cottage, she would rear the babies, she would pay some older woman who was past more active work a small sum (but the accepted rate) to look after the babies while she was in the factory. She would take this burden off his shoulders as she had taken the burden of housework off Annie's. She had permitted John and Annie to enjoy the luxury of love and now she was permitting John the luxury of woe. She said that she would "manage," he knew the enormous implications of the word, but knew, because she said it, that she would keep her promise. There was no limit to his faith in Phoebe and he touched her shoulder gently, undemonstratively, saying in that simple gesture all his unspeakable gratitude, accepting what she gave not because he underrated it, not because he did not understand, but because it was the only thing to do.

For her his touch and his acceptance were abundance of reward. Go to Hepplestall! Take charity, when this sustaining faith was granted her? Oh, she would manage though her body cracked. It was a soiling and a shameful thought that these babes were Reuben's grandchildren.

They were not his and John, please God, would never know who was his father; they were hers and John's and they two would keep them for their own.

It wasn't bravado either. It wasn't a brief heroical resolution begotten of the emotions caused by Annie's death. She counted the cost and chose her fight, spurning the thought of Hepplestall as if the justice he might do her were an obscenity. She knew what she undertook to do and, providing only that she had ten more years of life, she would do it.

John, mourning for Annie, was not too sunk in grief to be unaware of the fineness of his mother. Would Annie—she who loved her life—have said "Things are," if she had foreseen how soon the things which were bad were to be so infinitely worse? The factory had killed her, it had taken his Annie from him, it had put upon his mother in her age the burden she took up with a matter of fact resignation that seemed to him the ultimate impeachment of the system which made heroism a commonplace.

"Mother!" he cried. "Mother!"

"Eh, lad," she said, "we've got to take what comes."

She did not, at least, as Annie did, answer his inarticulate revolt with religion, but she had fundamentally the same resignation to the things of this world, and for the same reason. She, too, looked forward to a radiant life above: she saw in her present troubles the hand of God justly heavy upon one who had been a light woman. John, knowing nothing of that secret source of her humility, attributed all to the one cause, to the Factory which crushed and maimed and killed in spirit as in body. He refused his acceptance, his resignation. There was, there must be, something to be done. But what? What?

First, at any rate, Annie had to be buried with the circumstance which seemed to make for decency and for that they had provided through the Benefit Society. This—

decent burial—was the first thought behind the weekly contributions paid, heaven knows at what sacrifice, to the Society and they were rewarded now in the fact that Annie was not buried at the expense of the parish. That was all, bare decency, not the flaunting parody with plumes and gin of the slightly less poor: nor were there many mourners. Leave was given to a select few to be absent for an hour from the factory, and the severe fines for unauthorized absence kept the numbers strictly, with one exception, to the few the overseer chose to privilege. Phoebe and John were granted the full day, without fine, and, of course, without wage, and so, it appeared, was Mr. Barracough. But Mr. Barracough was on business, and the fine that he would have to pay would figure in the expenses he would charge Mr. Needham.

One or two old women—old in fact if not in years, incapacitated by the factory, for the factory—had been at the graveside and were going home with Phoebe, and it was natural that John should hold out his hand to Barracough, this unexpected, this so self-sacrificing sympathizer and that they should fall into step as they moved away together.

"Man, I had to come. I'm that sorry for thee. Coming doan't mean much for sure, but—"

"It means a day's wages, choose how," said John, who knew that Barracough was not of the few who had been granted an hour's leave to come.

Barracough nodded. "And a fine, an' all," he said, "but that all counts somehow. Seems to me if it weren't costing me summat, it u'd not be the same relief it is to my feelings. I didna come for thy sake, I came to please masel', selfish like. I had to get away from yond damned place that murdered her. I couldna' stand the sight o' it to-day."

"Murdered her!" said John. He had, no doubt, used

that word in thought, but it had seemed to him audacious, a thought to be forbidden utterance. And here, shaming him for his mildness was one, an outsider, a stranger, who, untouched intimately by Annie's death, yet spoke of it outright as murder. John felt that he was failing Annie, that he had not risen to his occasion, that it was this other, this fine spirit, who could not "stand the sight" of the factory on the day of her funeral, who had risen to the occasion more worthily than John, who was Annie's husband. "Aye," he said somberly, "it was murder."

"You never doubted that, surely," said Barraclough.

"Oh," said John, "when a woman dies in childbirth—"

"Aye, but fair treated women don't. What art doing now? I mean for the rest of the day. Looking at it from my point of view, I might as well tak' the chance to get out o' sight o' yond hell-spot. I'm going on moors for a breath of air. Wilt come? Better nor settin' to hoam brooding, tha' knows."

His point was simply to get John in his emotional crisis to himself, but luck was with him in his proposal further than he knew. For John, the moors were a reminder of Annie at her sunniest, but for the moment all that he was thinking of was that strange instinct for the sympathetic stranger rather than for the sympathy, too poignant to be borne, of his mother. And he did not wish to see his sons that day.

"'Tis better nor brooding," he agreed, and went. There was virtue, he thought, in talking. Phoebe was all reserve and action, and on this which resolved itself into a day off from the factory, she would be very active in her house. He was quite sure that he did not want to go home. Exercise for his legs, air for his lungs and the conversation, comprehending but naturally not too intimate, of this kindly stranger—these were the things to get him through the day.

But the conversation of Mr. Barraclough was not calculated to be an anodyne.

"Thank God, we've gotten our backs to it. We're walking away from yond devilry, we've our faces to summat green." How often had he not heard something like that from Annie! "It beats me to guess what folks are made of, both the folk that stand factories and t'other folks that drive 'em into factories. I know I've gotten an answer to some of this under my bed where I lodge and I'll mak' the answer speak one of these days an' all."

"An answer? What answer? I've looked and found no answer."

"No? They looked at Blackburn and found th' wrong answer an' all, th'ould answer that the Luddites found and failed wi'. Smashing machines! Burning factories! What's the good o' that? They nobbut put up new factories bigger and more hellish than before and mak' new machines that'll do ten men's work instead of two. Aye, they were on wrong tack in them days. They were afraid to get on right tack."

"Is there a tack that's right?" he asked.

"There's shooting," said Barraclough.

"Shooting? Tha' canna shoot an engine, nor a factory."

"No, and that's the old mistake. Trying to hit back at senseless brick and iron. There's men behind the factories, men that build and men that manage. Men that own and tak' the profits of our blood and death. For instance, who killed thy wife?"

"Why . . . why . . ." hesitated John, who was still intrigued obscurely with the idea that he, the father of her child, was author of her death.

"She died o' th' conditions o' Hepplestall's factory and yo' canna' bring yer verdict o' willful murder against con-

ditions. Yo' bring it against the fiend that made the conditions. Yo' bring it against Reuben Hepple stall."

"Maister Hepple stall!"

"Aye, Maister. Maister o' us fra' head to heel. Maister o' our lives and deaths, and gotten hissel' so high above us that I can see tha's scared to hear me talk that road of him." That was true, Barracough seemed to John almost blasphemous. Hepple stall *was* high above them, so that to make free with his name in this manner was something outrageous. "Aye, the spunk's scared out of thee by the name of Hepple stall as if tha' were a child and him a boggart. But I tell thee this, he isna a boggart. He's a man and if my bullet gets him, he'll bleed and if it gets him in the right place, he'll die, and there'll be one less in the world o' the fiends that own factories and murder women to mak' a profit for theirselves."

"You'd do that! You!"

"Some one must do the job. Th' gun's to hoam under my bed, loaded an' all. Execution of a murderer, that's what it'll be. Justice on the man that killed thy wife."

John halted abruptly. "What's to do?" asked Barracough. "Let's mak' th' most of this day out o' factory. Folks like thee and me mustna' think too much of causes o' things. The cause of this day off was thy wife's death, but we've agreed tha's not to brood. So come on into sunshine and mak' the most of what we've gotten."

"We'll mak' the most of it by turning to hoam," said John.

"Thy hoam's no plaice for thee to-day."

"No. But thy hoam is," said John. "I want to see yon gun. I'm thinkin' that'll be a better sight for me nor all the heather in Lankysheer."

"For thee?" Mr. Barracough was greatly surprised. "Nay, I doubt I was wise to mention my secret to thee."

"Art coming?" John was striding resolutely homewards.

"Well, seeing I have mentioned it, I suppose there's no partiklar harm in showing it. O' course, tha' canna' use a gun?"

"Can't I? No, you're reight there. I'm not much of a man, am I? As tha' told me, I've gotten no spunk, but I've spunk enough now. It weren't more than not seeing clear and tha's cleared things up for me wonnerful."

"I have? How?"

"Tha' can shoot, if I canna', Barraclough." Which was disappointing to the spy, who thought things were going better than this.

Still he could bide his time and "Aye, I can shoot," he said. "I've been in militia."

"Then tha' can teach me," said John, to Mr. Barraclough's relief. "I'll be a quick learner."

"Well, as tha's interested, I'll show thee how a trigger's pulled," and Barraclough was, in fact, not intending to go further than that in musketry instruction. Hepple-stall killed might, indeed, encourage the others, it might array the manufacturers solidly under Needham's reactionary standard, but Barraclough read murder as going beyond his directions, and supposed that if Reuben were fired on and missed (as he would be by an amateur marksman), the demonstration of unrest at Hepple-stall's would have been satisfactorily made.

He was, therefore, sparing in his tutorship when they had come into his room and handled the gun together. "We munna call the whole neighborhood about our ears by the sound of a shot," he said.

"No," said John, "but if tha'll lend me this, I'll find a place for practicing up on moors."

"Lend thee my gun! Nay, lad, tha's asking summat. It wenna do to carry that about in dayleight."

"I'll tak' it to-night, and bring un back to-morrow neight."

"To-night? Tha' canna' practice in the dark."

"Maybe I'll ha' no need to practice. Maybe there's justice and summat greater nor me to guide a bullet home. I can nobbut try and I'm bound to try to-night—the neight o' the day I buried her, the neight when I'm hot. I'm poor spirited and I know it, and I'm wrought up now. To-morrow I'll be frit."

Barracough balanced the gun in his hands. "I had my own ideas o' this," he said—the idea in particular, he might have added, had this been an occasion for candor, that such precipitancy was contrary to the best interests of an informer. Before an event occurred, a sagacious spy should have prophesied it and here was this ardent boy in so desperate a hurry for action that Barracough was like to be cheated of the opportunity of proving to Needham that he was dutifully accessory before the fact.

But, he reflected, he had not found Hepplestell's a fertile earth for his seeds, and if he played pranks with this present opportunity, if he attempted delay with a boy like John, a temperamentalist now in the mood to murder, he might very well lose his only chance of justifying himself. Besides, he could yet figure as a prophet and at the same time establish a sound alibi for himself if immediately after handing the gun over to John, he set off to report to Needham. On the whole, he saw himself accomplishing the object of his mission satisfactorily enough.

"Who's gotten the better right?" John was saying. "Thou that's not had nobbut a month o' the plaice, or me that buried a wife this day killed by Hepplestell?"

Barracough bowed his head. He thought it politic to hide his face just then, and the motion had the seeming of a reverent assent. "I've no reply to that," he said.

"Thy claim is strongest. Come when it's dark, and tha' shall have the gun."

John moved to the door.

"Where'st going now?" asked Barracough, apprehensive of the slackening of the spring he had wound up.

"To her grave," said John, and Barracough nodded approvingly. He trusted Annie's grave; there would be no slackening of the spring and mentally he thanked John for thinking of a grave-side vigil. Barracough had not thought of anything so trustworthy; he had thought of an inn, to which the objections were that he had no wish to be seen in company with John, and that alcohol is capricious in effect.

Barracough had given him a goal, and an outlet for all his pent-up emotion. There was his dreadful childhood in the factory, then the splendid mitigation whose name was Annie, and the tearing loss of her: behind all that, there was the System and above it now was Hepplestall. He had an exaltation by her grave. There was a people enslaved by Hepplestall and there was John Bradshaw, their deliverer, John Bradshaw magnified till he was qualified for the high rôle of an avenging angel. He was without fear of himself or of any consequences, he had no doubts and no loose ends, he had simply a purpose—to kill Hepplestall. To be sane is to think and John did not think: he felt.

There was some reason why he could not kill Hepplestall till it was dark. Once or twice he tried, vaguely, to remember what the reason was, then forgot that he was trying to remember anything. When it was dark he was to go to Barracough's for the gun with which he would kill Hepplestall. He was cold and hungry, shivering violently and aware of nothing but that he was God's executioner.

When dusk came he left the grave and went, dry-lipped, stumbling like a man walking in a dream, to Barraclough's. At the sight of him, Barraclough had more than doubt. Of what use a gun in these palsied hands? What demonstration, other than one palpably insane, could this trembling instrument effect?

But Bradshaw was the one hope of the agent and since there was nothing else to trust, he must trust his luck.

"The gun! The gun!"

Barraclough placed it in his hands without a word and John turned with it and was gone. The canny Barraclough, taking his precautions in case the worst (or the best) happened, slept that night in a public-house midway between Needham's and Hepple stall's. He had made himself pleasant to several passers-by on the road; he had asked them the time; he had established his alibi.

CHAPTER X

DOROTHY'S MOMENT

WHEN Edward came home on the day of his introduction to the factory, Dorothy met him with an anxious, "Well, Edward?" and, "Oh, Mother," he had said, "I have to think of this. Pray do not ask me now."

That was all and, if she liked, she could consider herself snubbed for attempting an unwomanly inquisitiveness into the affairs of men, but he intended no snub nor did she interpret him as side-tracking her. It was, simply, that he refused to involve Dorothy in this trouble.

He might be forced to take some desperate measure—nothing more hopeful than his first thought of enlistment had yet occurred to him—and if things were to come to an ugly pass like that he wasn't going to have his mother concerned in them. He declined the factory, and discussion would not help.

Reuben felt no surprise at Edward's silence. The boy was, no doubt, considering his situation and would come in time to the right conclusions about it; he would see that this was not a thing to be settled now, but one which had been settled twenty years ago by the fact that Edward was Reuben's firstborn son. No: he was not anxious about Edward, with his jejune opinions, his young effervescence, his failure, from the polities of Oxford, to perceive that life was earnest. Edward wanted, did he, to play at being a lawyer: so had Reuben once played at

being a Jacobite. Youth had its green sickness. But Dorothy was different: he couldn't disembarass himself so easily about Dorothy.

They were all putting a barrier between their thoughts and their words, but marriage had not blunted, it had increased, his sensitiveness to Dorothy's moods, and he was aware that she was troubled now more deeply than he had ever known her moved before. She seemed to him to be badly missing the just perspective, to be making a mountain of a mole-hill, to be making tragedy out of the commonplace comedy of ingenuous youth, to be too much the mother and too little the wife, to be, by unique exception, unreasonable: but all this counted for nothing with him when Dorothy was pained. Yet he couldn't, in justice, blame Edward as first cause of her grief when the cause was not Edward, or Edward's youth, but the universal malady of youth. He reminded himself again of that fantastic folly of his own youth, Jacobitism, and it was notably forebearing in him to remember it now and to decide that his own green sickness had been less excusable than Edward's.

What it came to was that some one must clear the air, some one must break this painful silence they were, by common consent, keeping about the subject uppermost in their minds. In a few days now Edward would return to Oxford for his last term and it must be understood, explicitly, that when he came home it was to begin his apprenticeship at the factory. Get this thing finally settled, get it definitely stated in terms on both sides, and Dorothy would cease to make a grief of it. It was the inconclusiveness, he thought, which perturbed her.

Edward had a Greek text on his knee when Reuben went into the drawing-room: he might or he might not have been reading it. He might have been conscious that Dorothy had suddenly got up and thrown the curtains,

back from the window and had opened it and stood there now as if she needed air. Reuben had the tact to make no comment.

He sat down. Then he said, "Edward, I have been thinking of the time when I was your age and it came into my mind that had I then been shown a factory such as I showed you the other week, I should have thought it a very atrocious sight. I couldn't, of course, actually have been shown such a place when I was your age, for there were no such places. Steam was in its infancy. But I put the matter as I do to show you that I understand the feelings you did not trouble to conceal."

"Thank you, sir," said Edward. "I have to acknowledge that I was not complimentary to your achievement. I was not thinking of it as an achievement, but I, too, have been thinking and I see how cubbishly I failed in my appreciation."

"Come," said Reuben, "this is better."

"As far as it goes, sir, yes. But I am not to go much further. In the shock of seeing the ugliness of that place, I believe that I forgot my manners—more than my manners. I forgot your mastery of steam. I forgot that having turned manufacturer, you became a great manufacturer. I—" he hesitated. "I am not trying to be handsome. I am trying to be just."

"Just?"

"And, believe me, trying not to be smug. I only plead, sir, that I am old enough to know my own tastes."

"Are you? I can only look back to myself, Edward, and I am certain that when I was your age, I had no taste for work."

"A barrister's is a busy life, sir. That is what I seek to persuade you."

"And I grant you that it may be. I will grant even that you may have a taste for work, and work of a legal

kind. And I have still to ask you if you think it right to put selfish tastes in front of plain duty."

"Oh, why did you send me to Oxford, sir? Why, if you destined me for the factory, did you first show me the pleasantness of the world?"

"I wished my son to be an educated gentleman. You have seen Richard Needham. He is a product, extreme, but still a product, of the factories and nothing but the factories. He is, as I told you, an able man. But he is coarse. He is a manufacturer who has no thought beyond manufacturing. That is why I sent you to Oxford, where you went knowing that you were heir to Hepple-stall's. You have treated this subject now as if the factory was a surprise that I have sprung upon you."

"In theory, sir, I suppose I knew what you expected of me. But I had never seen the factory and the factory, in practice, after Oxford, after some education, some glimpse of the humanities, is—"

"I, too," Reuben warned him, "had my education."

"Yes," said Edward. "Yes," and looked at his father with something like awe. It was true that Reuben was educated—if Edward wanted proof, there was that bookishness of his which bordered at least on scholarliness—and he had stomached the factory; he had stomached it and remained a gentleman! He impressed Edward by his example: he had had the cleverness, in this conversation, to suggest that Edward, young, was in the same case as Reuben, young, had been.

As a fact, their cases were not parallel at all. Circumstances such as Mr. Bantison had pressed Reuben into manufacturing: he had discovered, almost at once, his enthusiasm for steam: he had surrendered himself with the imaginative glamor of the pioneer and if the road was stony, if once he had strayed down the by-path whose name was Phoebe, he had, at the end of it, Dorothy, that

bright objective. Edward had none of these. Edward came from Oxford, with his spruce ambition to cut a figure at the bar, and was confronted with the menacing immensity of the great factory, full-grown in naked ugliness. He was without motive, other than the commands of his father, to do outrage on his prejudices.

But it was not for Reuben to point out these differences, nor, it seemed, for Dorothy to intervene with word of such of them as she perceived. She was all with Edward in this struggle, but she was loyal to Reuben and he did her grave injustice if he thought she had made alliance with her son against her husband. She had kept silence and she meant to keep silent to the end—if she could, if, that is, Reuben did not drive too hard: and she had to acknowledge that, so far, he had not used the whip. As for her private sufferings, she hoped she had the courage to keep them private. That was the badge of women.

"Then I can only admire," Edward was saying. "I can only give you best. I can only say you are a stronger man than I."

Reuben thought so too, but "Pooh," he said, "an older man."

"But you were young when you took up manufacturing. I—I cannot take it up. Let me be candid, sir. I abhor the factory."

"We spoke just now of tastes. Will it help you to think of the factory as an acquired taste? You are asked to make a trial of it and it is not usual to refuse things that are known to be acquired tastes—olives, for example—without making fair trial of them."

"No," said Edward, meeting his father's eye. "But it is usual to eat olives. It is not usual for a gentleman to turn manufacturer."

"Edward!" Dorothy broke silence there.

"Oh?" said Reuben, "this is natural. Our limb of the

law has ambitions. Already he is fancying himself a judge—my judge."

"I apologize, sir," said Edward. "I acknowledge, I have never doubted, that you are both manufacturer and gentleman. But I cannot hope to repeat that miracle myself."

"You can try."

"I have the law very obstinately in my mind, sir. I could, as you say, try to become a manufacturer. One can try to do anything, even things that are contrary to one's inclinations and beyond one's strength."

"I will lend you strength."

"You could do that and I am the last to deny you have abundance of strength. But I believe in spite of your aid that I should fail, and the failure would not be a single but a double one. After failing here as manufacturer, I could hardly hope to succeed elsewhere as a barrister. I should have wasted my most valuable years in demonstrating to you what I know for myself without any necessity of trial, that I am unfitted for trade."

"You believe yourself above it. That is the truth, Edward."

It was the truth. Reuben had stooped and Edward did not intend to perpetuate the stoop. Edward was a wronged man cheated of his due, robbed by the unintelligible apostasy of his father of his birthright of land ownership and if the attitude and the language with which he now confronted Reuben were unfilially independent, they were, at least, reticent and considerate expressions of what he actually thought. Reuben imagined him youthfully extravagant: he was, on the contrary, a model of self-restraint, he was a dam unbreakable, withstanding an urgent flood. The indictment he could fling at his father! The resentments he could voice! And, instead, he was do-

ing no more than refusing to go into a disreputable factory. Above it? He should think he was above it.

"I used the word 'unfitted,'" he said. "Shall we let that stand?"

"Till you disprove it, it may stand. When you come down from Oxford, you will go into the factory and disprove it."

"No."

"I have been very patient, Edward. I have let you talk yourself out, but—"

"Lord, sir, the things I haven't said!"

"Indeed? Do you wish to say them?"

Edward did, but he glanced at his mother, whose one contribution to their discussion had been a reproof of him, of him, who had been so splendidly restrained! Why, then, should he spare her? Why, if she had deserted to the other side, should he not roll out his whole impeachment? Why not, even though it implicated her, even though he must suggest that she was accessory to the weaving of the web in which he struggled? He thought she was, because of that one sharp cry, on Reuben's side in this.

She read that thought. She saw how wildly he who should have known better was misunderstanding her, and it added to a suffering she had not thought possible to increase. Was this her moment, then? Sooner or later, she must intervene, she must throw in her weight for Edward at whatever strain upon her loyalty to Reuben, but it must be at the right moment and probably that moment would not come yet, when Edward was present to confuse her by his indiscretions, but later, when she was alone with Reuben. It was enormously, it was vitally important that she should choose her moment well. If she spoke now, she would of course correct the mistake that Edward

was so cruelly making about her, but that was not to the main point. She would not, if she could help it, speak till she was sure that the favorable moment had arrived. All else was to be subordinate to that.

Reuben followed Edward's glance. "Yes," he said, "you are distressing your mother," and, certainly, she felt her moment was escaping her. If she spoke now she must say, "No, Reuben. You, not Edward, are the cause of my distress," and she could not say that. She could only wait, feeling that to wait was to risk her moment's never coming at all.

"I see we are distressing her," said Edward, studiously abstaining from putting emphasis upon the "we." "And the many more things that I might say shall not be said. I will take a short cut to the end. The end is my absolute refusal to go into the factory upon any terms whatever."

Reuben rose, with clenched fists. He had not the intention of striking his son, but the impulse was irresistible to dominate the slighter man, to stand menacingly over him. How in this should she find her moment? Where if temper rose, if Reuben did the unforgivable, if he struck Edward, where was her opportunity to make a peace and gain her point? As she had cried "Edward!", so now, "Reuben!" she cried, and put a hand on his.

He responded instantly to the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand. "You are right, Dorothy," he said. "We must not flatter our young comedian by taking him gravely."

"That is an insult, sir," said Edward.

"In comedy," Reuben smiled suavely at him, "it may be within the rules for a father to insult a vaporizing son. In life, such possibilities do not exist."

Ridicule! Edward could fight against any weapon but this. "You treat me like a child," he said in plaintive impotence.

"Oh, no," said Reuben. "So far, I have given you the benefit of the doubt. I have not whipped you yet."

"Whipped!"

"A method of correction, Edward, used upon children and sometimes on those whose years outstrip their sense."

"Do you seriously picture me, sir, remaining here to be a whipping block?"

"Children run away: and children are brought back."

Her moment! Oh, it was slipping from her as they squabbled, Edward's future was at stake, and not his alone. If young Tom Hepplestall was for the army, there were still her younger sons; there were Edward's own unborn sons. The stake was not Edward's future only, it was the future of the Hepplestalls and all her landed instincts were in revolt against the thought that her sons were to follow Reuben in his excursion, his strange variation, from the type she knew. Once his factory had seemed mysterious and romantic. Now, she was facing it, she was seeing it through Edward's outraged eyes. Incredible mercy that she had not seen it before, but not incredible in the light of her love for Reuben. It had been a thing apart from her life and now, implacably, was come into it. There was no evading the factory now; there was no facile blinking at it as a dark place in Reuben's life about which she could be incurious, it was claiming her Edward, it had come, through him, into her life now.

It was crouching for her, like a beast in the jungle and what was to happen when the beast sprang, to her, to Reuben, to their love? She had held aloof from the factory and she had kept Reuben's love. Were these cause and effect and was her aloofness a condition of his love? Was her hold on him the hold of one consenting to be a decoration, and no more than a decoration in his life? Had she shied from facts all these years, and was retribution at hand?

These were desperate questionings, but Edward was her son and she must take her risks for him, even this risk imperiling her all, this so much greater risk than the life she risked for him when he was born. But when to speak? When to put all to the test? Surely not just now when this pair of men, one calling the other "child," both, one as bully, the other as Gasconader, were behaving like children. She groped helplessly for her moment.

Then, suddenly, as she seemed to drown in deep water and to clutch feebly upwards, she knew that her moment was come. She had not heard the sound of the shot coming from the shrubbery and felt no pain. She only knew that she was weak, that her moment, safely, surely, was come, and that she must use it quickly.

Because she was lying on the floor and Reuben and Edward were bending over her, she was looking up into their faces. That seemed strange to her, but everything was strange because everything was right. In this moment, there was nothing jeopardous; she had only to speak, indeed she need not actually trouble to put her message into words, and Reuben would infallibly agree with her. There were no difficulties, after all. She had felt that it was only a question of the right moment, and here was her moment, exquisitely, miraculously, compellingly right.

Her hand seemed very heavy to lift but, somehow, she lifted it, somehow she was holding Reuben's hand and Edward's, somehow she was joining them in friendship and forgiveness. It was right, it was right beyond all doubt. Reuben would never coerce Edward now, and she smiled happily up at them.

"Reuben," she said, then "Edward," that was all. Her hand fell to the floor.

Edward looked up from Dorothy's dead face to see his father disappearing through the window, but Reuben need

not have hurried. John Bradshaw was standing in the shrubbery twenty yards from the window, making no effort to run. There was no effort left in him. He was the spring wound up by Mr. Barracough; now he had acted and he was relaxed; he was relaxed and happy. A life for a life, and such a life—Hepplestall's! He had led his people out of slavery. He had shot Hepplestall.

And in the light from the window, he saw rushing at him the man who was dead. There was no Annie now to laugh his superstitious fears away and to fold him in her protective arms: there was no one to tell him that the silent figure was not Hepplestall's ghost. He believed utterly that a "boggart" was leaping at him.

True, there was a leap, and a blow delivered straight at his jaw with all the force of Reuben's passionate grief behind it, and the blow met empty air. John, felled by a mightier force than Reuben's, felled by his ghostly fear, lay crumpled on the ground and Hepplestall, recovering balance, flung him over his shoulder like a sack and was carrying him into the house before the servants, alarmed by the shot, had reached the room.

Edward met him. "I am riding for the doctor, sir," he said.

"Doctor?" said Reuben. "It's not a doctor that is needed now, it's a hangman. Lock that in the cellar," he said to the servants, dropping his sprawling burden on the floor, "and go for the constables." Then, when they were gone, when he had silenced by one look their cries of horror and they had slunk out of the door as if they and not the senseless boy they carried were the murderers, "Leave me, Edward, leave me," he said.

Edward stretched out his hand. There was sympathy in his gesture and there was, too, a claim to a share in the sorrow that had come to them. Dorothy was Edward's mother.

"Go," said Reuben fiercely; and Edward left him with his dead.

The beast had made his spring. Dorothy had not gone to the factory, and the factory had come to her.

CHAPTER XI

THE HATE OF THE HEPPLESTALLS

PHOEBE made all reasonable, and a few indulgent, allowances for the weaknesses of manflesh, but when she awoke to the knowledge that John had not been home all night, she was downright angry with him. A bereaved husband might accept the consolation offered by his friends on the day of his wife's funeral, and might go on accepting it late into the night. She had left the door on the latch for him with the thought that it wasn't like John to drown his sorrow, but men were men, even the best of them, and she had put a lot of housework behind her that day. He would have been constantly getting in her way with his clumsy efforts to help, and if he had found forgetfulness, no matter how, they had both of them come through the day very well.

But he had not come home at all; he had forgotten too thoroughly, and Phoebe intended to give him "the rough side of her tongue" the moment she came across him in the factory. It never occurred to her that he would not be in the factory. To be out all night was a departure from his custom, and on such a night a departure from decency, but to be absent from work was more than either of these; it was defiance of necessity, a treachery to her and to his children and she knew her John better than to suspect him of conduct like that. He might be grief-stricken and, after that (homeopathically), ale-stricken,

but the law of nature was "Work or Clem," and John would be at work.

He was not at work, and that was not the only thing to be remarked that morning. Nobody appeared to have a word for her, though there was an exceptional disposition to gossip. Even the overseers had caught the infection and formed gossiping groups to the detriment of discipline. She was too preoccupied at first to notice that she was their cynosure or to wonder what it meant, but she couldn't for long be unconscious of their gaze.

They were looking at her, every one was looking at her, and her first impulse was to be angry with them for staring so curiously and her second was to conceal her awareness of their gaze. They stared? Let them stare. She had not been at the factory on the previous day, but she had had leave of absence. She had been burying her daughter-in-law, and if they wanted to stare at her for that, they could stare. And then she connected their fixed regard with John's absence. There was something serious then? Something about John of which they knew and she did not? She dropped abruptly her pretense of unconsciousness.

"For God's sake tell me what's to do," she cried. "If it's John, I'm his mother and I've the right to know."

Will Aspinall, the overseer, detached himself from his group. "Get at work," he bawled at large, then with a rare gentleness, led Phoebe aside. "Either tha's gotten th' brassiest faice i' Lankysheer, or else tha' doan't kna'," he said.

"Is it to do with John?" she asked.

"Aye," he said, "it's all to do wi' thy John."

"I know nothing beyond that he's not been home all night."

"A kna' he's not bin hoam. He's done wi' coming hoam."

"Why? Why? What has happened?"

"A'm striving to tell thee that. Th' job's not easy, though." He looked at her. "Wilt have it straight?"

"I'm never afraid of truth."

"Truth can hit hard. Well, I'll tell thee. Thy John shot at th' maister's wife last neight an' hit her. They've gotten him." He upturned a waste-bin. "Now, A'm real sorry for thee and it weren't a pleasant job for me to break th' news. That's over, though, and tha' knows now. Next sit thee down on this. It's in a corner, like, and folks canna watch thee. When tha' feels like work, come and tell me." He left her with rough kindness, and relieved his feelings by cuffing a child who was peering round a loom at them. He was paid to be brutal, and the child, gathering himself up from the floor, might have thought that the overseer was earning his wages: but the shrewd blow was rather a warning to the rest and an expression of his sympathy with Phoebe than an episode in his day's work.

That Aspinall, and not he alone but the general sense of the workers, should be sympathetic towards her was in its way remarkable enough. They expected naturally that John would hang, but they had definitely the idea that retribution for his deed would not stop at the capital punishment of the actual malefactor. Hepple stall would "tak' it out of all on us," and "We'll go ravenous for this," "Skin an' sorrow—that's our shape," and (from a humorist) "Famished? He'll spokeshave us" were some of the phrases by which they expressed their belief in the widespread severity of Hepple stall's vengeance.

Yet they had no bitterness against John, nor against Phoebe who, as his mother, might be supposed to have a special responsibility. It was a dreadful deed and the more dreadful since his bullet had miscarried and had killed a woman; but it had fanned to quick fire their

smoldering hatred of Hepplestell and there was more rejoicing than regret that he was, through Dorothy, cast down. They would have preferred to know that John had hit the true target but, as it was, it was well enough and they were not going to squeal at the price they expected to pay. Their commiseration was not for the bereaved master, but for the about-to-be-bereaved mother of the murderer.

Somebody moved a candle so that Phoebe in her corner should be the more effectually screened from observation. It was a kindly act, but one which she hardly needed. Her thoughts were with John, but not with a John who was going to be hanged; they were with a John who was going to be saved.

Murderers were hanged and so for the matter of that were people convicted of far less heinous crimes. That was the law, but she had never a doubt but that Hepplestell was above the law, that he was the law, and that John's fate was not with an impersonal entity called justice but, simply, with Hepplestell. Probably two-thirds of her fellow-workers were firmly of the same belief in his omnipotence, though they hadn't, as she supposed she had, grounds for thinking that he would intervene on John's behalf.

When Annie died she had told herself vehemently that she would never go, a suppliant, to Hepplestell, she would never let him share in John's children who were his grandchildren; but that resolution was rescinded now. Reuben had never hinted since the day when Peter and Phoebe went to him, aghast at the edict which broke Peter's factory, that he remembered he had had a son by Phoebe. It was so long ago and perhaps he had indeed forgotten, but she must go to him and remind him now. She must tell him that John Bradshaw was his son. He could not hang his son.

Daylight was penetrating through the sedulously cleaned windows of the factory. It was the hour when expensive artificial light could be dispensed with and candles were being extinguished; it was the hour, too, when Reuben might ordinarily be expected in his office. He had the usual manufacturers' habit of riding or walking to the factory for half an hour before breakfast, and to-day word was passed through the rooms that he had, surprisingly, arrived as usual.

The word had not reached Phoebe, but she expected nothing else. She had to speak with Reuben, and therefore he would be there. She came from her corner and told Aspinall what she intended.

"Nay, nay?" he said.

"Please open the door for me."

"A canna'," he said. "Coom, missus, what art thinking? He'll spit at thee."

"I have to speak to him about John," said Phoebe. "Open the door and let me through."

"It's more nor my plaice is worth," he said, but, nevertheless, he was weakening. She was not making a request, she was not a weaver asking a favor of an overseer, she was Phoebe Bradshaw, whom Peter had brought up to be a lady, giving an order to a workman in the tone of one who commands obedience as a habit.

He scratched his head in doubt, then turned to a fellow-overseer and consulted with him. They murmured together with a wealth of puzzlement and headshaking and, presently, "Now, Mrs. Bradshaw," said Aspinall, "tak' heed to me. Yon door's fast, but me an' Joe here are goin' to open it on factory business, understand. If happen tha's creeping up behind us, it's none likely we'll see thee coomin' and if tha' slips through door and into office while we've gotten door open on our business, it's because tha' was too spry for us to stop thee. That's best we

can do for thee and it's takkin' big risks an' all."

"I'm grateful," said Phoebe.

They opened the door and made loud sounds of protest as she slipped through, causing Reuben to look up from the bureau where he was opening his letters and to see both Phoebe standing in his office and the actors at the door. He waved them off and, when the door was closed, "Well?" he said.

"Reuben!" said Phoebe.

He rose with an angry cry. How dared she, this weaver, this roughened, withered old woman, address him by his Christian name? This gray wraith, whose hair hung mustily about her like the jacket of lichen about a ruined tree, she to call him by the name his Dorothy alone had used! That morning of all mornings it was outrage of outrages.

He did not know her whom once he nearly loved. Twenty years ago he had put her from him and had excluded her from his recollection. Long ago the factory had outgrown the stage when an employer has knowledge of his workpeople as individuals; he did not know her nor had the identification of the prisoner as John Bradshaw, a spinner in the factory, conveyed any personal significance to him. Bradshaw was a common name, and he had never known that Phoebe had called their son John.

"But I am Phoebe," she said, standing her ground before his menacing advance. "Phoebe, Reuben. Phoebe, who—Phoebe Bradshaw."

He remembered now, he had remembered at the second "Phoebe"—and at the second "Reuben." He was even granting her, grimly, her right to call him by that name when the "Bradshaw" struck upon his ear.

"Bradshaw?" he repeated. "Bradshaw?" And this second time, there was an angry question in it.

"I came about John," she said. "John is our son,

Reuben. Of course he did not know, but—" Reuben had covered the space between them at a bound. He was holding her hands tightly, he was looking at her with eyes that seared. In moments like these, thought outspaces time. John, his wife's murderer, was his son, and the son of Phoebe Bradshaw whom he had—well, he supposed he had betrayed her. She had told the son, of course. He had nursed a grievance, he had shot Dorothy in revenge. Whether he had aimed at Reuben and hit Dorothy, or whether he lied when he had made that statement to the constable and had, in fact, aimed at Dorothy, they had the true motive now. Reuben might have put it that his sin had found him out, but his thought did not run on those lines. Then, what was she saying? "Of course, he did not know." Oh, that was absurd, that took them back for motive to what John had been telling the constable—that he shot at Hepplestall to—to—(what was the boy's wind-bagging phrase which the constable reported?)—"to set the people free from a tyrant."

"Say that again," he said.

She met his eye fearlessly. "Of course he did not know. You could not think that I would tell of my shame. Father and I, we invented a second cousin Bradshaw whom I married, who died before John was born."

Yes, she was speaking the truth, and, after all, he didn't know that it mattered very much. Dorothy was dead, either way, but, yes, it did matter. It mattered enormously, because of Dorothy's sons. If John had known, there must have been disclosures at the trial, things said against Reuben, ordinary enough but not the things he cared to have Dorothy's sons know about their father.

It wasn't criminal to have seduced a woman twenty years ago, and the exceptional thing about Reuben was that he had seduced no more women, that he had not abused his position as employer. Needham was known,

with grim humor, as "the father of his people." Whereas Reuben had been Dorothy's husband.

He saw the trial and that disclosure insulting to Dorothy's memory. He heard the jeers of Needham and his kind. Hepple stall, Gentleman Hepple stall, reduced by public ordeal to a common brutishness with the coarse libertines he had despised! He saw Dorothy's sons contemptuous of their father. This, they would take occasion to think, was where factory-owning led a man.

"You're sure of this?" he asked. "You're absolutely sure he did not know he is my son?"

"Absolutely," she said.

"Ah," he said, "that's good. If he had known, I believe I must have taken measures to defeat justice. I should have done all in my power to have spirited him away before the trial; and I believe I should have contrived it. I feel quite keenly enough about the matter to have done that." Which was, to Phoebe, confirmation of her belief in his omnipotence. "But, as it is," he went on, "as it is, thank God, the law can take its course." He was back in his chair now, looking at her with a relief that was almost a smile, if tigerish. She, he was thinking, might still speak to his discomfiture if she were put in the box at the trial, but he would see that she was not called. There was no need to call her to establish John's absence from home that night, when he had been caught red-handed. They could do without Phoebe, and he would take care they should.

"Can take its course," she repeated, bewildered. What had Reuben meant if not, incredibly, that had she told John of her "shame," he would have been saved now, but that, as it was, John must— "But it cannot tak' its course, John is your son. Your son. Reuben, he's your son. You cannot hang your son."

"He killed my wife."

"But you haven't understood. They haven't told you. John was not himself. He—"

"Drunk?"

"No, no. Oh, Reuben. He was crazed with grief on account of his wife. Don't they tell you when the likes of that chances in the factory? Annie Bradshaw, that was John's wife and your daughter-in-law—she bore a child on the floor in there and died. You must have heard of it."

Reuben nodded. "These women," he said, "are always cutting it too fine." His gesture disclaimed responsibility for the reckless greed of women.

"Yes," she said, brazenly agreeing with his monstrous imputation, "but John loved Annie and he's been in a frenzy since she died and in his mazed brain we can see how it seemed to him. We can, can't we, Reuben? She died in the factory and it looked to him that the factory had killed her. And then he must have got a gun. I don't know how, but we can see the crazy lad with a gun in his hands and the wild thought in his mind that the factory killed Annie. It's your factory, it's Hepple-stall's, and it 'ud seem to him that Hepplestall killed Annie, so he took his gun and came to your house and tried to kill you. A daft lad and a senseless deed and an awful, awful end to it, but we can read the frantic thoughts in his grief-struck brain, we can understand them, Reuben—you and I." She sought to draw him into partnership with her, to make him share in the plea which she addressed to him.

But "He killed my wife," Reuben said again.

She had a momentary vision of Reuben and Phoebe twenty years ago riding home to Bradshaw's on the afternoon when they had met Dorothy in the road, and Dorothy had cut him. She had talked then, she had chattered, she had striven to be gay and her talk had rebounded, like a

ball off a wall, from the stony taciturnity of his abstraction and that night, that very night. . . . It had been Dorothy then, and it was Dorothy now. "He killed my wife."

"But, Reuben, he was mad."

"Still—"

She flung herself upon her knees. "Reuben, you cannot hang your son. Not your son, Reuben."

"Quiet," he commanded. "Quiet."

"Oh, I will be very quiet." She lowered her voice obediently. "If there are clerks through that door, they shall not hear. No one shall ever know he is your son. You can save him and you must. He is your son and there are babies, two little boys, your grandchildren, Reuben. What can I do alone for them? Give John back to me and we can manage. It will be mortal hard, but we shall do it."

The woman was impossible. Actually she was pleading not only for the murderer's release, but for his return. His wife, Dorothy, lay dead at this boy's hands, and Phoebe was assuming that nothing was to happen! But, by the Lord, things were going to happen. Crazy or not that phrase of John's stuck in his throat—"to set the people free from a tyrant." Where there was one man thinking that sort of thing, there were others; it was a breeding sort of thought. Well, he'd sterilize it, he'd bleed these thinkers white. Meantime, there was Phoebe, and, it seemed, there were two young encumbrances. "There is the workhouse," he said.

"Not while I live," said Peter Bradshaw's daughter.

"But to live, Phoebe, you must earn, and there will be no more earning here for you." The workhouse was a safe place for a woman with a dangerous story and anything that escaped those muffing walls could be set down

as the frantic ravings of a hanged man's mother. This side-issue of Phoebe was a triviality, but he had learned the value of looking after the pence—as well as the pounds.

"Oh, do with me what you like. You always have done. But John—John!"

He looked his unchanging answer.

"I am to go to the workhouse. Is not that enough? I to that place and his children with me, John to—to the gallows, and why? Why? Because through all these years I have given you a gift. The gift of my silence. You are going to hang my son because I did not tell him he was your son. You could save him and you don't because he did not know. Reuben, is there no mercy in you?" There was none. John had killed Dorothy. "Then, if I shriek the truth aloud? If I cry out now so that your clerks can hear me, that John is your son? If—"

"It would make this difference, Phoebe. You would go to the madhouse, instead of to the workhouse. In the one you would be alone. In the other you would sometimes see John's brats." He rang the hand-bell on his desk.

"And teach them," she said, "teach them to speak their first words, 'I hate the Hepplestalls.' "

Perhaps he heard her through the sound of the bell, perhaps not. A well-drilled clerk came promptly in upon his summons. "This woman is to go at once to the workhouse, with two children," he said. "If there are forms to go through refer the officials to me."

In the factory they called him "Master." He was master of them all. She did not doubt it and she went.

Reuben finished reading his letters before he went home to breakfast. He read attentively, doing accustomed

things in his accustomed way because it seemed that only so could he drug himself to forgetfulness of Dorothy's death, then gravely, with thoughts held firmly on business affairs, he mounted his horse to where skilled hands had made death's aftermath a gracious thing.

Edward had spoken to his brothers. "Give me five minutes alone with Father when he comes in," he said. It seemed to him this morning that once, a prodigious while ago, he had been fatuously young and either he had quarreled with his father or had come near to quarreling—he couldn't be expected to remember which across so long a time as the night he had passed since then—about so obvious a certainty as his going into the factory. Dorothy, in that moment when she held their hands together, had made him see so clearly what he had to do. A moment of reconciliation and of clarification, when she had indicated her last wish. It was a law, indeed, and sweetly sane. "Why, of course, Mother," he had been telling her through the night, "Father and I must stand together now." He told, and she could not reply. She could not tell him how grotesquely he misinterpreted her moment.

He met Reuben at the door. "Father," he said, "there is something you must let me say at once. My mother joined our hands last night. May we forget what passed between us earlier? May we remember only that she joined our hands last night, and that they will remain joined?"

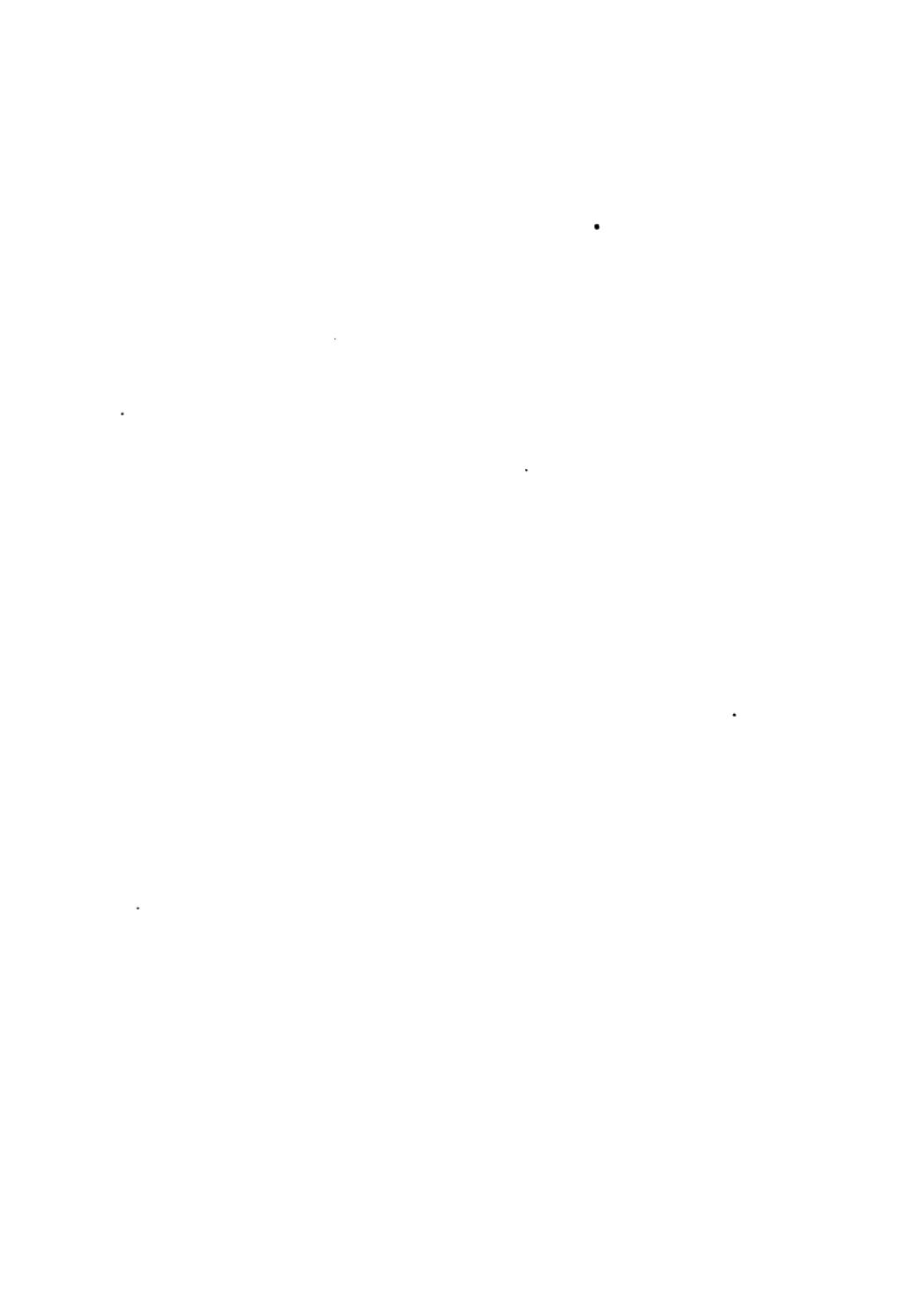
"I hope they will," said Reuben, not quite certain of him yet.

"The man who killed her came from the factory. I should like your permission to omit my last term at Oxford. I want very deeply to begin immediately at the factory." His voice rose uncontrollably. "Drive or be driven,' sir, you said the other day. And by God, I'll

drive. I'll drive. That blackguard came from there."

"Come with me after breakfast," Reuben said, shaking the hand of his heir. And in that spirit Edward went to Hepplestall's to begin his education.

Dorothy had died happy in the bright certainty of her authentic moment!



PART II

CHAPTER I

THE SERVICE

"**I**F there is a man whose job I've never envied, it's the Prince of Wales," groaned Rupert Hepplestall, looking in his mirror with an air of cynical boredom and fastening white linen round a bronzed neck. "And I'm going to get the taste of it to-day."

The point was that it was Rupert's sixteenth birthday, and the sixteenth birthday of a Hepplestall was an occasion of such moment that he had been brought back from Harrow to spend that day at home.

On their sixteenth birthdays, the Hepplestall boys, and some others who were favored though only their mothers were Hepplestalls, were received in the office and from thence escorted through the mills by the Head of the Firm with as much ceremonious aplomb as if they were Chinese mandarins, Argentine financiers, Wall Street magnates, Russian nobles, German professors or any of the miscellaneous but always distinguished foreigners, who, visiting Lancashire, procured invitations to inspect that jewel in its crown, the mills at Staithley Bridge. For the boys it was the formal ritual of initiation into the service of the firm. A coming of age was nothing if not anti-climactic to the sixteenth birthday of a Hepplestall.

Not all Hepplestalls were chosen; there were black sheep in every flock, but if a Hepplestall meant to go black, he was expected to show symptoms early and in Rupert's

case, at any rate, there was no question of choice. Rupert was the eldest son.

He would return to school, he would go to a university, but to-day he set foot in the mills, and the step was final. The Service would have marked him for its own.

Rupert was cynical about it. "It's like getting engaged to a barmaid in the full and certain knowledge that you can't buy her off," he said and that "Barmaid" indicated what he secretly thought of the show-mills of Lancashire. But he was not proposing resistance; he was going into this with open eyes; he knew what had happened to that recreant Hepplestall who, so to speak, had broken his vows—the man who bolted, last heard of as a hanger-on in a gambling hell in Dawson City, "combined," the informant had said, "with opium." It wasn't for Rupert. He knew on which side his bread was buttered. But "Damn the hors d'oeuvres," he said. "Damn to-day." Then, "Pull yourself together. Won't do to look peevish. Come, be a little prince."

He composed in front of the mirror a compromise between boyish eagerness and an overwhelming sense of a dignified occasion, surveyed his reflection and decided that he was hitting off very neatly the combination of aspects which his father would expect. Then he jeered at his efforts and the jeer degenerated into an agitated giggle: he was uncomfortably nervous. "This prince business wants getting used to," he said, recapturing his calculated expression and going downstairs to the breakfast room.

Only his father and mother were there. To-night there would be a dinner attended by such uncles as were not abroad in the service of the firm, but for the present he was spared numbers and it seemed a very ordinary birthday when his mother kissed him with good wishes and his father shook his hand and left a ten pound note in it.

He expected an oration from his father, but what Sir Philip said was "Tyldesley's not out, Rupert. 148. Would you like to go to Old Trafford after lunch?"

"To-day!" he gasped. Could normal things like cricket co-exist with his ordeal?

"Yes, I think I can spare the time this afternoon," and so on, to a discussion of Lancashire's chances of being the champion county—anything to put the boy at his ease. Sir Philip had been through that ordeal himself. He talked cricket informally, but what he was thinking was "Shall I tell him he's forgotten to put a tie on or shall I take him round the place without?" But he could hardly introduce a tie-less heir to the departmental managers, who, if they were employees had salaries running up to fifteen hundred a year, with bonus, and were, quite a surprising number of them, magistrates. So he proceeded to let the boy down gently. "Hereditiy's a queer thing," he said. "It's natural to think of it to-day, and I shall have some instances to tell you of later, when we get down to the office. But what sets me on it now is that precisely the same accident happened to me on my sixteenth birthday as has happened to you. I forgot my tie."

"Oh, Lord!" Rupert was aghast, feeling with twitching fingers for the tie that wasn't there.

"I take it as a happy omen that you should have done the same."

"You really did forget yours, dad?"

"Really," lied Sir Philip.

"Then I don't mind feeling an ass," said Rupert, and his father savored the compliment as Rupert left the room. It implied that the boy had a wholesome respect for him, while, as to his own diplomacy, "The recording angel," he said, turning to his wife, "will dip in invisible ink."

Lady Hepplestall touched his shoulder affectionately,

and left him to his breakfast-table study of the market reports.

The baronetcy was comparatively new. Any time these fifty years the Hepplestalls could have had it by lifting a finger in the right room; and they had had access to that room. But titles, especially as the Victorian shower of honors culminated in "Jubilee Knights," seemed vulgar things, and Sir Philip consented to take one only when it seemed necessary that he should consent, after much pressure from his brothers. It seemed necessary in 1905 and the Hepplestell baronetcy, included amongst the Resignation Honors conferred by the late Balfour administration, was a symbol of the defeat of Joseph Chamberlain and "Tariff Reform." It advertised the soundness of the Unionist Party, even in the thick of the great landslide of Liberalism, it registered the close of the liaison with Protection. If Hepplestell of Lancashire, Unionist and Free Trader, accepted a baronetcy from the outgoing Government, the sign was clear for all to read; it could mean only that Hepplestell had received assurances that the Party was going to be good, to avoid the horrific pitfalls of "Tariff Reform." Lancashire could breathe again and Sir Philip, sacrificing much, immolated his inclinations on the twin altars of Free Trade and the Party. If ever man became baronet *pour le bon motif*, it was Sir Philip Hepplestell. A gesture, but a gallant one.

Rupert spoke many things aloud in lurid English to his reflection in his mirror; the banality of having so carefully studied his facial expressions while not perceiving the absence of a tie struck him as pluperfect, but his vituperative language was, happily, adequate to the occasion and he successfully relieved his feelings. One combination of words, indeed, struck him as inspired and he was occupied in committing it to memory as he went downstairs to Sir Philip.

"I feel like the kid who had too much cake and when they told him he'd be ill, he said it was worth it," he announced. "It was worth it to forget my tie."

"In what way in particular?" asked Sir Philip, mentally saluting a spirited recovery.

"Will you ask me that next time I beat you at golf and words fail you? I've got the words."

Anyhow, he'd got his impudence back and Sir Philip, knowing the massive impressiveness of the mills, was glad of it. He wanted his boy to bear himself well that day, and he was not afraid of levity or over-confidence when he confronted him with Hepplestall's. He had, he admitted to himself, feared timidity; he had, at any rate, diagnosed acute nervousness in Rupert's breakfast-table appearance, and feeling that the attack was vanished now, he rang for the car with his mind easy.

The site of old Reuben's "Dorothy" factory was still the center whose extended perimeter held the mills known to Lancashire, and nearly as well known to dealers in Shanghai, or in the Malji Jritha market, Bombay, as Hepplestall's, but the town of Staithley Bridge lay in the valley, extending down-stream away from the mills, so that there was country still, smoky but pleasant, between the Hall and the town. Electric trams bumped up the inclines through sprawling main-streets off which ran the rows upon uniform rows of cell-like houses, back-to-back, airless, bathless, insanitary, in which the bulk of the workers lived. Further afield, there were better, more modern houses, costing no more than those built before the age of sanitation—and these were more often to be let than the houses of the close-packed center. It may have been considered bumptious in Staithley to demand a bath, and a back-garden; it may have been held that, if one lived in Staithley, one should do the thing thoroughly; or it may have been that cleanliness too easily attained was

thought equivalent to taking a light view of life. In their rooms, if not in their persons, they were clean in Staithley, even to the point of being "house-proud" about their cleanliness; but medicine that does not taste foul is suspect, and so is cleanliness in a house when it is attained without the greatest possible mortification of female flesh. You didn't, anyhow, bribe a Staithley man by an electric tram and a bright brick house with a bath to "flit" from his gray stone house in an interminable row when that house was within reasonable walking distance of the mills or the pits. No decentralization for him, if he could help it: he was townbred, in a place where coal was cheap and fires extravagant, and a back garden was a draughty, shiversome idea.

But all this compress of humanity, and the joint efforts of the municipality and the jerry-builder to relieve it, lay on the side of the mills remote from the Hall—old Reuben had seen far enough to plant the early Staithley out of his sight, and where he planted it, it grew—and the short drive through dairy farm-land and market-gardens was not distressing to eyes accustomed to the pseudo-green, sobered by smoke, of Lancashire. Nor had the private office of the Hepplestalls any eyesores for the neophyte. He had been in less comfortable club-rooms.

Indeed, this office, with its great fireplace, its Turkey carpet, its shapely bureau that had been Reuben's, and its chairs, authentically old, chosen to be on terms with the historic bureau, its padded leather sofa and the arm-chairs before the fire, and above all, the paintings on the wall, had all the appearance of a writing-room in a wealthy club.

"This is where I work, Rupert," said Sir Philip, and Rupert wondered if "work" was quite the justifiable word. He thought the room urbane and almost drowsily urbane, he thought of work rather as the Staithley people thought

of cleanliness, as a thing that went with mortification of the flesh, and things looked very easy in this room. But he reserved judgment. Sir Philip was apt to come home looking very tired. Perhaps the easiness was deceptive.

A telephone rang, and his father went to the instrument with an apology. "This is your day, Rupert, but I must steal five minutes of it now." He spoke to his broker in Liverpool, and there were little jokes and affabilities mingled with mysterious references to "points on" and other technicalities. There was an argument about the "points on," and Sir Philip seemed very easily to get the better of it, and then, having bought a thousand bales of raw cotton futures, he put the telephone down and said, "That's the end of business for to-day." An insider would have known that something rather important had happened, that the brain of Sir Philip had been very active indeed in those few minutes when he lingered over the market-reports at the breakfast-table, that trained judgment had decided a largish issue and that a brilliant exhibition of the art of buying had been given on the telephone. Rupert's impression was that some enigmatic figures had casually intruded while Sir Philip passed the time of day with a friend in Liverpool who had rather superfluously rung him up. At Harrow, veneration of the business man was at a discount, and he believed Harrow was right. To write Greek verse was a stiffer job than to be a cotton-lord—on the evidence so far before the court.

"Well," said Sir Philip, "I'm going to try to show you what Hepplestall's is, and the portraits on these walls make as good a starting-point as I can think of. That is Reuben, our Founder. There are a few extant businesses in Lancashire founded so long ago as ours; there are even older firms. But such age as ours is rare. It's been an in-and-out business, the cotton trade. You know the pro-

verb here that "It's three generations from clogs to clogs." That is, some fine fellow born to nothing makes a mark in life, rises, fights his way, and beginning as man ends as master, giving the business he founded such momentum as carries it along for the next generation. His son is born to boots, not clogs, but he hasn't as a rule the strength his father had. He's lived soft and his stock degenerates through softness. The business of the old man doesn't go to pieces in the son's time, but it travels downhill as the momentum given it by its founder loses force. And the grandson of the founder is apt to be born to boots and to die in clogs; he begins as master and ends as man. That is the cycle of three generations on which that proverb is founded, and not unjustly founded. It's one of the points about the cotton trade that a strong man could force his way out of the ranks, but it's the fact that his successors were more likely to lose what he left them than to keep it or improve upon it. I'll go so far as to say that making money is easier than keeping it.

"We Hepplestalls have had the gift of keeping it. What a father won, a son has not let go. The sons have been fighters like their fathers before them and with each son the battleground has grown. Well, that might terrify you if I don't explain that long ago, in your great-grandfather's time indeed, the firm had outgrown the power of any one man to control it utterly. There were partnerships and a share of the responsibility for the younger sons. More recently, in fact when my father died, we made a private limited company of it. Two of your uncles, Tom and William, in charge in Manchester, have great authority, though mine is the final word. What I am seeking to tell you is that while it is a tremendous thing —tremendous, Rupert—to be the Head of Hepplestall's, the burden is not one which you will ever be called upon to bear single-handed. The day of the complete autocrat

went long ago. But this is true, that the Head of Hepplestall's has been the general in command, the chief-of-staff, the man who guarded what his ancestors had won and who increased the stake. That is the Hepplestall tradition in its minimum significance."

Rupert started. In spite of his boyish skepticism he was already seeing himself as the Lilliputian changeling in a house of the Brobdingnagians, and if this were the minimum tradition, what, he wondered, was the maximum?

"We have the tradition of trusteeship," Sir Philip proceeded. "And the trusteeship of Hepplestall's is an anxious burden. It includes what I have spoken of already; it includes our family interests, but they are the smallest portion of the whole. We are trustees for our workpeople: we do not coddle them, but we find them work. That is a serious matter, Rupert. I have of course become accustomed to it as you will become accustomed to it, but the thought is never absent from my mind that on us, ultimately on me alone, is laid the burden of providing work for our thousands of employees. Trade fluctuates and my problem is, as far as is humanly possible, to safeguard our people against unemployment."

"I never thought of it like that," said Rupert, whose crude ideas of Labor were rather derived from his public school, and occasional reading of reactionary London newspapers, than from his home. "I wonder if they are grateful?"

"Their gratitude or their ingratitude has no bearing on my duty," said Sir Philip.

"But aren't there strikes?"

"You might put it that since 'ninety-three we have bowdlerized strikes in Lancashire. We fight with buttons on our foils, thanks to the Brooklands agreement."

Rupert tried to look comprehending, but he could only associate motor-racing with Brooklands. "Still," he

said, "I don't believe they are grateful. There's that Bradshaw beast."

"Ah!" said Philip, "Bradshaw! Bradshaw!" The name pricked him shrewdly. "But no," he said, "he's not a beast."

"He's Labor Member for Staithley," said Rupert. "I see their gratitude less and less."

"Well," said his father, "we were speaking of tradition. The Bradshaws come into the Hepple stall tradition. A wastrel gang and queerly against us in every period. A Bradshaw was hanged for the murder of Reuben's wife. There were Chartist Bradshaws, two turbulent brothers, in my grandfather's day. In my day, Tom Bradshaw was strike leader here in the great strike of 'ninety-two."

"And they sent him to Parliament for it," said Rupert hotly.

"Tom's not a bad fellow, Rupert. I admit he's their masterpiece. The rest of the Bradshaws are work-shys and some of them are worse than that. But they do crop up as a traditional thorn in our flesh and I daresay you'll have your battle with a Bradshaw. Nearly every Heppe stall has had, but if he's no worse a chap than Tom, M. P., you'll have a clean fighter against you. But there's a more serious tradition than the Bradshaws, a fighting tradition, too, a Hepple stall against a Hepple stall, a son against a father."

"Oh!" Rupert protested.

"Yes. I expect to have my fight with you. It's the march of progress. Look at old Reuben there and Edward his son. Reuben was a fighter for steam when he was young. Other people thought steam visionary then if they didn't think it flat blasphemy. But he grew old and he couldn't rise to railways. Edward brought the railway to Hepple stall's, right into the factory yard, in the teeth of Reuben's opposition and when Reuben saw rail-

way trains actually doing what Edward said they would do, carrying cotton in and goods out and coal out from the pit-mouth, he retired. He gave Edward best and went, and Edward lit the factory with gas, made here from his own coal, and Reuben prophesied fire and sudden death and the only death that came was his own.

"That portrait is of William, Edward's son. Their fight was over the London warehouse. William did not see why we sold to London merchants who re-sold to shops; and William had his way, and later quarreled with his son Martin over so small a thing as the telegraph. That was before telephones, and you had an alphabetical switchboard and slowly spelt out sentences on it. William called it a toy, and Martin was right and saved thousands of valuable hours. But I had the honor of telling my father, who was Martin, that he had an intensive mind and that lighting the mills by electricity, and re-building on the all-window design to save artificial light and installing lifts and sprinklers (to keep the insurance low) were all very useful economies but they didn't extend the trade of Hepplestall's. I went round the world and I established branches in the East. I didn't see why the Manchester shipping merchants should market Hepplestall's Shirtings in Shanghai and Calcutta. My father told me I had bitten off more than I could chew, but he let me have the money to try with. Well, there's your uncle Hubert in charge at Calcutta now, and your uncle Reuben Bleackley at Shanghai, you've cousins at Rio and Buenos Aires and Montreal and on the whole I can claim my victory. I wonder," he looked quizzically at Rupert, "what your victory over me will be? To run our own line of steamers? To work the mills by electricity? I give you warning here and now that I'm against both. Oil—oil's a possibility; but we needn't go into those things now."

"I hope I shall never oppose you, sir," said Rupert.

"Then you'll be no true Hepplestall—and you are going to be. You'll go through it as the rest of us went through it, and you'll come out tried and true. I'll tell you what I mean by going through it. That's no figure of speech. We are practical men, we Hepplestalls, every man of us. We've diverse duties and responsibilities, but we've a common knowledge, and an exact one, of the processes of cotton manufacture. We all got it in the same way, and the only right way—not by theory, not by looking on, but by doing with our own hands whatever is done in these mills—or nearly everything. You're going to be a carder and a spinner and a doubler and a weaver. You're going to come into the place at six in the morning with the rest of the people and the only difference between you and them is that when you've learned a job you'll be moved on to learn another. You'll come to it from your university and you'll hate it. You'll hate it like hell, and it'll last two years. Then you'll have a year in Manchester and then you'll go round the world to every branch of Hepplestalls. In about five years after you come here, you'll begin to be fit to work with me, and if you don't make a better Head than I am, you'll disappoint me, Rupert."

Rupert was conscious of mutinous impulses as his father forecasted the rigorous training he was expected to undergo. How cruel a mockery was that suave office of Sir Philip! And Sir Philip himself, and all the Hepplestalls—they had all submitted to the training. They had all been "through it." And they called England a free country! Well, he, at any rate—

He felt his father's hand upon his knee, and looked up from his meditations. "It is a trust, Rupert," said Sir Philip.

Rupert began to hate that word and perhaps his suppressed rebellion hung out some signs, for Sir Philip

added, almost, but not quite, as if he were making an appeal, "always the eldest son has been the big man of his time amongst the Hepplestalls. It hasn't been position that's made us; each eldest son has made himself, each has won out by merit. My brothers were a tough lot, but I'm the toughest. And you. You won't spoil the record. You'll be the big man, Rupert. And now we'll go through the mill," he went on briskly, giving Rupert no opportunity to reply.

Rupert was shown cotton from the mixing room where the bales of raw material were opened, through its processes of cleaning, combing, carding to the spinning-mill whence it emerged as yarn to go through warping and sizing to the weaving sheds and thence to the packing rooms where the pieces were made up and stamped for the home or the foreign markets. Hepplestall's had their side-lines but principally they were concerned with the mass production of cotton shirtings and Rupert was given a kinematographic view of the making of a shirting till, stamped in blue with the world-famous "Anchor" brand, it was ready for the warehouse, which might be anywhere from Manchester to Valparaiso or Hongkong; and as they went through the rooms he was introduced to managers, to venerable overseers who had known his grandfather, fine loyalists who shook his hand as if he were indeed a prince, and everywhere he was conscious of eyes that bored into his back, envious, hostile sometimes, but mostly admiring and friendly. He was the heir.

He walked, literally, for miles amongst these men and women and these children (there were children still in the mills of Lancashire, "half-timers," which meant that they went to the factory for half the day, and to school the other half, and much good school did them after that exhilarating morning!), and he bore himself without confessing openly his consciousness that he was not so much

inspecting the factory as being inspected by it. All that he saw, he loathed, and he couldn't rid his mind of the thought that he was condemned to hard labor in these surroundings. But there were mitigations.

"And," said a white-haired overseer as he shook Rupert's hand, "'appen we shall see you playing for Lanky-sheer one of these days."

"You have ambitions for me," he smiled back.

"Well, you're on the road to it."

That was the delightful thing, that they should know that he was on the road to it. They must be keenly interested to know so much when his place in the Harrow first eleven was only a prospect—as yet—a pretty secure prospect, but one of those intimate securities which were decidedly not published news. It was a reconciling touch, bracing him to keep up his gallant show as they made their progress, but neither this nor the self-respecting deference of the high-salaried, efficient managers resigned him to the price he was expected to pay for being Hepplestall. That dour apprenticeship, which Sir Philip had candidly prophesied he would "hate like hell," daunted him; those five years out of his life before he "began to work." It was a tradition of the service, was it? Then it was a bad tradition. He didn't object to serve, but this was to make service into slavery.

Allowing for school and university, he wouldn't come to it for another six years yet, and by then he ought to be better equipped for a rebellion. But—the infernal cunning of this sixteenth-birthday initiation—it would be too late then. From to-day, if he let the day pass without protest, he wore the chains of slavery, he was doomed, marked down for sacrifice, and he was so young! He resented the unfairness of his youth pitted in unequal conflict with his father.

"One last tradition of the Hepplestalls, Rupert," Sir

Philip said as they returned to his office, "though I expect you're hating the word 'tradition.'" Oh, did his father understand everything and forestall it? "The eldest sons have not come to it easily. Sometimes there's been open refusal. There've been ugly rows. There's always been a feeling on the son's part that the terms of service were too harsh. Well, I have come to know that they are necessary terms. We are masters of men, and we gain mastery of ourselves in those days when we learn our trade by the side of the tradesmen. We cannot take this great place of ours lightly, not Hepplestall's, not the heavy trust that is laid upon us. We cannot risk the failure of a Hepplestall through lack of knowledge of his trade or through personal indiscipline. Imagination, the gifts of leadership are things we cannot give you here; either you have them in you or you will never have them, and it is reasonable to think you have them. They have seemed to be the birthright of a Hepplestall. But we can train you to their use.

"There is that Japanese ideal of the Samurai. I don't think that it is absent from our English life, but perhaps we have not been very explicit about our ideals. There's money made here, and if I told some people that what actuates me is not money but the idea of service, I should not be believed. I should be told that I confused Mammon with God: but I am here to serve, and money is inescapable because money is the index of successful service in present day conditions. Service, not money, is the mainspring of the Hepplestalls, the service of England because it is the service of Lancashire. We lead—not exclusively but we are of the leaders—in Lancashire. We are keepers of the cotton trade, trustees of its efficiency, guarantors of its progress.

"I am earnest with you, Rupert. Probably I'm offending your sense of decent reticence. Ideals are things to

be private about, but let us just for once take the wrappings off them and let us have a look at them. . . . Well, we've looked and we'll hide them again, but we won't forget they're there. I suppose we keep a shop, but the soul of the shopkeepers isn't in the cash-register."

How could he reply to this that the training which had been good enough for his father and his uncles was not good enough for him? Somewhere, he felt certain there were flaws to be found and that Sir Philip was rather a special pleader than a candid truth-teller, but he impressed, and Rupert despised himself for remaining obstinately suspicious of his father's sincerity.

"And you're a Hepplestell. That is not to be questioned, is it, Rupert? In the present and in the future, in the small things and the large, that is not to be questioned."

It was now or never for his protest. Mentally he wriggled like a kitten held under water by some callous child and as desperately. He would drown if he could not reach the aid of two life-buoys, courage to outface Sir Philip and wits to put words to his thoughts.

"No, sir, that is not to be questioned," he heard himself, unexpectedly, say, and Sir Philip's warm handshake sealed the bargain. He had not meant to say it; he did not mean to stand by what he had said, but his hand responded heartily to his father's and his eye met Sir Philip's gaze with the charming smile of frank, ingenuous youth.

He was thinking that six years were a long time and that there were men who had come to great honor after they had broken vows.

CHAPTER II

THE VOICE FROM THE STREET

THE room held a grand piano, a great fire and two men of fifty who were playing chess. The stout, bullet-headed man with the mustache which did not conceal the firmness of his mouth was Tom Bradshaw; the lean man with the goatee beard, who wore spectacles, was Walter Pate. Both were autocrats in their way. Tom ran the Spinners' Union and was M. P. in his spare time, Walter ran music in Staithley Bridge and had no spare time except, on rare occasions, for chess.

Tom made a move. "That's done you, you beggar," he said, gleefully rising and filling a pipe.

Walter's fine hand flickered uncertainly over the board. He saw defeat ahead. "If I weren't a poor man, I'd have the law on you," he said.

"You can't play chess, Walter. It's a question of brain."

Pate shied the matches at him, and Tom sat at the piano and picked out a tune with one hand.

"Stop it!" cried Walter.

"On terms," said Tom.

"I hate you," said Walter. "Come away."

"The terms are the Meistersinger," said Tom.

"On a piano! You're a Goth."

"No. I'm paying you a compliment you deserve. Get at it."

Walter got.

Young Rupert in his Slough of Despond had been too

busy with himself to wonder why Sir Philip had corrected him when he described Tom Bradshaw as a "beast."

At his mother's knee, Tom, like all the Bradshaws of the seed of John, had lisped, "'A 'ate th' 'applestalls," and, when he was a little older, had learned that he hated them "Because they're dirty thieves. Because yon mills o' theiern are oun by rights." This was not socialism and had nothing to do with the doctrine that all property is theft; it was the family superstition of the Bradshaws, and they believed it as the first article of their faith.

They believed it blindly and perhaps none of them were eager to have their eyes opened because other people's eyes might have been opened at the same time and, as things usefully were, it was romantic to be the wronged heirs to Hepplestall's. It excused so much, it invited compassion for the victims of injustice, it extorted charity for these martyrs to foul play. Details were conspicuously lacking, but the legend had life and won sympathy for the view the Bradshaws took of themselves—that they couldn't be expected to go to work in the mills of the usurping Hepplestalls. As a family, they were professional cadgers whose stock-in-trade was their legend, and Staithley held enough people who were credulous or who were "agin the government" on principle (whether they took the Bradshaw claim seriously or not) to make the legend a profitable asset. Repetition is infallible, as the advertiser knows, and these ragged Ortons of the Staithley slums had plenty of adherents.

There were several scores of ways of earning a livelihood in Staithley without working at Hepplestall's, but the average Bradshaw pretended that as a natural pride prevented him from serving the despoiler, he was barred from work entirely, though he did not object to his children working for him, and Tom began as a half-timer in the mills. A bad time he had of it too at first. He did

not say it for himself, but the other half-timers said it for him: he was the "lad as owned Hepplestell's," and if there was any dirty work going, the owner did it, nursing anger against his family and coming young to a judicious opinion of their pretensions.

He had his handicap in life, but soon gave proof that if he was a Bradshaw it was an accident which other people would be wise to forget, fighting his way from the status of a butt till he was cock of the walk amongst the half-timers. There is much to be said for a wiry physique as the basis of success, but Tom shed blood and bruised like any other boy and the incidents of his battling career amongst the half-timers at Hepplestell's did nothing to disturb that first lesson of his life, "'A 'ate th' 'apple-stalls."

Hatred is a motive, like any other, and a strong one. It resulted in Tom's conceiving the ambition, while he was a "little piecer," that he would some day be secretary of the Spinners' Union and in that office would lead labor against the Hepplestalls. He was his own man now, living not at home but in lodgings, hardly keeping himself on the wages of a "little piecer" of eighteen, reading the *Clarion*, and presently startling a Sunday School debating society with the assertion that he read Marx and Engels in the original. It was not long after that astonishing revelation of his secret studies that he became unofficial assistant to the local secretary of the spinners, and might regard himself as launched on a career which was to take him in 1906 to the House of Commons.

An election incident accounted chiefly for Sir Philip's good opinion of Tom Bradshaw. Tom might forget the legend, but the legend could not forget a candidate, and it was thrown into the cockpit by some zealous supporter who imagined that Tom would ride that romantic horse and win in a canter. Tom thought otherwise; a story

obscurely propagated amongst Staithley's tender-hearted Samaritans was one thing, emerging into the fierce light which beats upon a candidate it was another. He was out to win on the merits of his case, not by means of a sentimental appeal which, anyhow, might be a boomerang if the other side took the matter up with the concurrence of the Hepplestalls.

But it was not that afterthought, it was purely his resolution that the issues should not be confused, that took him straight to Sir Philip. Sir Philip looked a question at him.

"It might be Union business," said Tom, "but it isn't. It's the election and I'm here, which is the other camp, to make you an appeal. There's a thing being said in Staithley that touches you and me. I haven't said it, but it was said by folk that thought they spoke on my behalf. You'll have heard tell of it?"

"I've heard," said Sir Philip.

"Well," said Tom, "there's always a lot of rubbish shot at elections, but the less the better. Will you help me to get rid of this particular load of rubbish? Will you help me to tell the truth?"

"Is there question of the truth?"

"Not in my mind. But in theirs, there is. They believed what they said of you and me." And he went on to tell Sir Philip of the belief of the Bradshaws and of its acceptance by others. "You can put it that it's never been an easy thing for me to be a Bradshaw in Staithley. We're known as the Begging Bradshaws and it's been a load I've had to carry that I'm one of them by birth. They've begged on the strength of this story. But it's only hurt me up to now. It's going to hurt others to-day, it's going to hurt my cause and I'm here not to apologize for folks that have done no more than said what they be-

lieve: I'm here to ask if you will join with me in publishing the truth."

"Shall I tell you the only fact known to me which may have bearing on your family's belief, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"I wish you would. That there's a fact of any sort behind it is news to me."

"A man called Bradshaw was hanged for the murder of an ancestress of mine. It is possible you are descended from this man."

"By gum!" said Tom. "That's an ugly factor. I didn't know I was in for one like that when I came here asking you to help me with the truth. Well, we'll publish it. It'll not help me, but I'm for the truth whether it's for me or against me."

Sir Philip crossed the room to him. "Shake hands, Mr. Bradshaw," he said. "We'll tell the truth in this together, but at the moment we've not gone very far. Your opinion of your family in general makes you rather too ready to believe that they are in fact the descendants of this murderer."

"Thank you, Sir Philip," said Tom. "But I'm not doubting it."

"What we can do, at any rate, is to go together through the records of the firm. Or I will employ some one who is accustomed to research and we will issue his report. My cupboard may have a skeleton in it, but it is open to you to investigate."

Tom Bradshaw sweated hard. "It's making a mountain out of a mole hill," he said. He had never, since the half-timers taught him commonsense, had anything but contempt for the legend of the Bradshaws; at every stage of his upward path it had embarrassed him, but never had he felt before to-day that it pursued him with such poisonous malignity. He had no hope that any point

favoring the Bradshaws would emerge from an examination of the records; it would be a fair examination of dispassionate title deeds and its fairness would be the more damaging. And he had pleaded for the truth, he had put this rapier into his political opponents' hands! The Labor candidate was the descendant of a murderer!

"Thank you again," he said.

"Oh, as to that," said Sir Philip, "the existence of this belief interests me. If our searcher finds any grounds for it here or in parish registers or elsewhere, I shall of course acknowledge them. But the odds are that the legend springs from a perverted view of the murder of which I have told you, and if that is so, I fear the disclosure will hardly profit you."

"It won't," said Tom gloomily. "But it'll shut their silly mouths." If, he reflected, it did not open them in full cry on a new and odious scent.

"So we go on with it?"

"We go on."

"May I say this, Mr. Bradshaw? That your attitude to this affair increases an admiration of you which was considerable before? If you beat us in this election we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we are beaten by a man." Which was handsome, seeing that there was the stuff of libel in the statements of Tom's well-meaning supporter. Amenities, but Tom did not doubt their sincerity, and his sentiment of personal hatred, already weakened by contact with the Hepplestalls in his Union affairs, merged into his general and tolerantly professional opposition to capitalists.

In the event, what was issued was a statement simply denying, on the authority of a historian, of Sir Philip and of Tom, that the claim made by the Bradshaw family, and repeated during the election, had any foundation whatsoever, and whether the denial had effect or not, it

cannot have made much difference to Tom's candidature. He had a clear two thousand majority over both Liberal and Unionist opponents, and had held the seat ever since, while the legend of the Bradshaws, like any lie that gets a long start of the truth, flourished as impudently as ever. In Bradshaw opinion, Tom Bradshaw had been bought, and they found fresh evidence for this view whenever Tom's matured attitude toward the Masters' Federation earned for him the disapproval of extremists. They did not cease to teach their children that if every one had their own, Hepplestall's was Bradshaws'. "A gang of wastrels," Sir Philip had called them to Rupert, and could have quoted chapter and verse for his opinion. As he read the history dredged by his searcher, the Bradshaws began with John, a murderer, and ended in a family of beggars; but he excepted Tom. When the Union spoke to him through Tom, there was no bitterness between them; there was a meeting on equal terms between two men who respected each other. Sir Philip recalled the Bradshaws as they figured in his historian's report, and he recalled the Hepplestalls. "Dying fires," he thought; Tom Bradshaw was eminently the reasonable negotiator.

Walter Pate crashed out the final chords.

"Aye," said Tom, "aye. A grand lad, Wagner. And when I hear you play him, it's a comfort to know I can wipe the floor with you at chess." Which Mr. Pate accepted as a merited salute to a brilliant performance, and unscrewed the stopper from a bottle of beer. A moment later Tom stared at his friend in blank amazement; he was staggered to see Pate raise the glass to his lips and put it down again.

"Man, are you ill?" he cried. The beer foamed assuringly, but, to be on the safe side, Tom tasted it. "The beer's fine, what's to do?"

"Shut up, you slave to alcohol. Shut up and listen."

Walter opened the window, the cold night air blew in and with it came from the street the strains of "Lead Kindly Light," sung in a fresh girlish voice.

Fires are fires in Staithley, as Tom was in the habit of telling Londoners who put coal by the dainty shovelful into a doll's house grate, and if he was commanded to shut up he could do it, but the open window was a persecution. There was a silent pantomime of two elderly gentlemen one of whom struggled to close a window, the other to keep it open, then Tom turned to the defeated Walter with a "What the hangment's come over you?"

"Have you no soul at all, Tom? Couldn't you hear her?"

"I heard a street-singer."

"You heard a class voice, and you're going to hear it again." Mr. Pate was at the window.

"Then bring her in," said Tom. "I'll freeze for no fad of yours. A class voice in Staithley streets!"

"A capacity to play chess is a limiting thing," was fired at him as Mr. Pate left the room. Tom took an amicable revenge by emptying both glasses of beer. "I've cubic capacity, choose how," he said, indicating their emptiness as Walter returned with the girl who had been singing.

"Get warm," said Walter to her. "Then we'll have a look at you."

She had, clearly, the habit of taking things as they came, and went to the fire with as little outward emotion as she had shown when Walter pounced upon her in the street. She accepted warmth, this strange, queerly luxurious room, these two men in it, as she would have accepted the blow which Walter's upraised hand and voice had seemed to presage in the street—with a fatalism full of pitiable implications.

She was of any age, beyond first childhood, that went with flat-chested immaturity; she was dirty beyond reason,

but she had beauty that shone through her gamin disorder like the moon through storm-tossed cloud. Her tangled hair was dark auburn, her eyes were hazel and as the fire's heat soaked into her a warm flush spread over her pinched face like sunshine after rain on ripening corn.

"Can you sing anything besides 'Lead Kindly Light?'" asked Walter.

"Of course she can't," said Tom. "It's the whole of the beggar's opera." He was sore about that opened window and resented this girl who had disturbed a musical evening. He had appetite for more than the "Meistersinger," and seemed likely, through the intruder, to go unsatisfied.

She looked pertly at Tom. "'A can, then,'" she said. "Lots more, but," her eyes strayed round the room, "'a dunno as you'd fancy 'em."

"Go on," said Walter. "There'll be supper afterwards."

"Crikey," she said, and sang till he stopped her, which was very soon. They had a taste in the meaner public-houses of Staithley for the sort of song which it is libelous to term Rabelaisian. Her song, if she did not know the meaning of its words, was a violent assault upon decency; if she did know—and her hesitation had suggested that she did—it was precocious outrage.

"Stop it," cried Walter, horrified.

Tom spat into the fire. "My constituents!" he groaned. "Walter, it's a queasy thought."

"I thought you favored education," said Walter.

"I do, but—"

"Go on favoring it. It's a growing child."

"Thanks," said Tom gratefully. "You're right. This is foul-tasting tonic, but it's good to be reminded how far we haven't traveled yet."

Walter's hand strayed gently to his friend's shoulder.

"Short fights aren't interesting," he said, and turned to the girl, whose patient aloofness through this little conversation, so unintelligible to her, was, again, revealing.

"Go back to the hymn," he said.

"A hymn?" The word had no meaning for her.

"'Lead Kindly Light,'" he explained.

"Oh, that," she said, and sang it through without interruption. It was street singing, adapted to penetrate through the closed windows of Staithley and by sheer shrillness to wring the withers of the charitable. Tom Bradshaw, amateur of music, found nothing in this insistent volume of song to account for Walter Pate's interest; she made, tunefully, a great noise in a little room, and he wished that Walter would stop her, though not for the same reason as before. But Walter did not stop her, he listened and he watched with acute absorption and when she had finished, "again," he said, gesturing Tom back into his chair with a menacing fist.

"It goes through me like a dentist's file in a hollow tooth," Tom protested.

"You fool," said Mr. Pate pityingly, and, to the girl, "Sing."

"Now," he said when she had ended, "I don't say art. Art's the unguessable. I say voice and I say lungs. I say my name's Walter Pate and I know. Give me two years on her and you'll know too. If you'd like me to tell you who'll sing soprano when the Choral Society do the 'Messiah' at Christmas of next year, it's that girl."

"'Oo are you gettin' at?" she asked.

"I'm getting at you, getting at you with the best voice-producing system in the North of England—Walter Pate's. And when I've finished with you, you'll be—well, you won't be singing in the street."

"Well, I can't see it, Walter," said Tom.

"You've the wrong letters after your name to see it,"

said Walter, "but I've made a find to-night, and I'm gambling two years' hard work on the find's being something that will make the musical world sit up. Buy a cheap brooch and it's tin washed with gold. That voice is the other way round. It's tin on top and gold beneath and I'm going digging for the gold." Not, he might have added, because gold has value in the market. If Walter Pate had discovered a voice which, under training, was to become the pride of Staithley, that was all he wanted; he wouldn't hide under a bushel his light as the discoverer and the instructor, but all he wanted else was proof in support of his often expressed opinion that musically Staithley led Lancashire (the rest of the world didn't matter) and he thought he had found his proof in—he turned to the girl. "You haven't told us your name," he said.

"Mary Ellen Bradshaw," she told him, and "Lord!" said Tom. "You'll waste your time."

"I shan't," said Walter. "There's grit amongst that tribe. You're here to prove it."

"Where do you live?" Tom asked her.

"Brick-yards, mostly," she said. "I'm good at dodging bobbies." There is warm sleeping by the kilns, and the police know it.

"Got any parents, Mary Ellen?"

"'A dunno. They was there last time 'A went to Jackman's Buildings. There weren't no baggin' there, so 'a 'opped it. That's a long time sin'."

"This gentleman is called Bradshaw," said Walter, to Tom's annoyance.

"Is 'e? she said. "'A 'ate th' 'applestalls." It might have been a pass-word, and Tom thought she had the intention, in speaking it, to curry favor with a rich relation, but as it happened Mary Ellen was sincere. She did not say she hated the Hepplestalls to please Tom Bradshaw. She said it because it was true.

Tom certainly wasn't pleased. He reached for his hat. "I'm off out of this," he said, and when Walter looked at him with surprise, "Man," he said, "it's beyond all to find that old ghost jibbering at me when I've sweated blood to lay it. You do not hate the Hepplestalls," he roared at Mary Ellen. "They're decent folk and you're mud."

"Aye," she said submissively. That she was mud, at any rate, was not news to her.

"Aye, what?"

"What yo' said."

"Come," said Walter. "There's tractability."

"I call it cunning. Beggar's cunning. She's a Bradshaw."

"Not to me. She's a Voice, and, by the Lord, I'll train her how to use it."

"What are you going to do, Walter?" Tom put his hat down, feeling that it was ungenerous to leave his friend in the grip of a mistaken impulse.

"Steal her. Well, no. That's not to do; it's done. She's here. Mary Ellen, you're going to sleep in a bed to-night, with sheets and a striped quilt on it like you see in the windows of the Co-op."

"Oo—er," said Mary Ellen.

"But," said Walter, "you're going to be washed first. The water won't be cold. It'll be warm, and it'll be in a bath. You've heard of baths?"

She nodded. "Aye," she said, "you 'ave 'em when you go to quod."

Tom turned suddenly away and when he looked round there were marks of suffering on his face. "I've been living too soft, Walter," he said. "I've been forgetting."

"No," said Walter, "your whole life is remembering. Education, Tom. Isn't that the sovereign remedy?"

"I'm believing in nothing just now," said Tom Bradshaw.

"Then I am. I'm believing in the voice of Mary Ellen and I'm going to educate it."

"Will it 'urt?" asked Mary Ellen.

"No," said Tom, "but I will if you're not grateful to Mr. Pate. I'll break your neck."

"Tom, Tom!" protested Walter.

"Eh, lad," said Tom, "I've got the heartache for the waif, but you're aiming to sink two years' good work in her, and she a Bradshaw. Man, they're the Devil's Own. They'll take and take and—do you fancy this is like me, Walter? Me arguing against one of the downs being given a chance to get up! But when it's you that's giving the chance and a Bradshaw that's to take it I've a sinking feeling that the risk's too big. They'll bite the hand that feeds them, they'll—"

"Well, I'll be bitten then. There are times when I doubt if you've a proper sense of the place of music in the world and I tell you, this is one of them. If I'm vouchsafed the chance of giving that voice to mankind, I can do without having her gratitude thrown in. I'm doing this to please myself, my lad, and for the honor and the glory of Staithley Bridge. If she goes on to where I'm seeing her, she'll wipe her boots on me in any case, but she'll not wipe out the fame of Staithley that bred her."

"She was bred in Jackman's Buildings. The beastliest slum in the town."

"They'll go pilgrimages to her birthplace."

"You don't believe that. Music's as bad as drink for damaging a man's sense of proportion."

Mary Ellen fidgeted, not with the distress which may be supposed to assail a sensitive child who is discussed before her face, but because the conversation missed her main point. "When's supper?" she asked.

"After your bath," said Walter, defying Tom with his

eyes. Tom took up his hat again. "I'm off," he said. "I've never found the cure for fools."

"All right," said Walter. "In two years' time, you'll be the fool. I'm going bail for that Voice, and it's neither here nor there that the Voice goes with a Bradshaw."

"Good night," said Tom, and went.

Mary Ellen "pulled bacon" at the door he closed behind him. "'A 'ate th' 'applestalls," she said cheekily, but her impudence fell from her as he returned. She thought he had heard her and had come to inflict punishment.

But Tom had not heard. "Walter," he said, "if you value my friendship, there's a thing you'll not deny me."

"Well?"

"I pay half. Let's be fools together."

Walter sucked meditatively at an empty pipe. "Aye," he said, "we're both bachelors and," holding out the hand of partnership, "I'm generous by nature, Tom. Tell Mrs. Butterworth I want her as you go downstairs."

CHAPTER III

MARY ELLEN

MARY ELLEN heard with trepidation that there was a Mrs. Butterworth on the premises; she was old enough to know that it was one thing to "get round" two men, and another to cozen a woman.

Her cozening had not been much more culpable than that of any one who sees a chance and determines not to fritter it away by understatement. It was not quite true, it was a propagandist gloss upon the truth, to say that she slept out on the brickfields, implying that she was homeless when she had sleeping nights in the fourth part of a bed in Jackman's Buildings. But there had been no dissembling, no thought to please Tom Bradshaw, when she said she hated the Hepplestalls. She hated them because she hated the misery in which she lived and because they were the cause of her living in misery. That was her implicit belief and the guile had not been in stating it but in denying it when Tom commanded her denial.

The guile had succeeded, too. Tom Bradshaw was not a strong man of his faction without knowing that there is a cant of the underdog as of the upper, and he had suspected her of "beggar's cunning." Then she had won him round; he had remembered that she was of his clan, he had felt that there, but for the grace of God and the difference of age and sex, went Tom Bradshaw, and he had gone partners with Walter in her future.

She had conquered males, but she feared Mrs. Butter-

worth and drew closer to the fire lest the woman should detect her as not so unsophisticated as she seemed nor so young as she looked.

She did not know Mrs. Butterworth nor the strength of Mrs. Butterworth's affection for Walter. Mrs. Butterworth was, in nominal office, his housekeeper; actually she was slave, without knowing she was slave, to a man who did not know he had enslaved her. Stoically she took whatever came from Walter, and things like lost kittens and broken-legged puppies came habitually. This time, making unprecedently a call upon her tolerance, a girl came and Mrs. Butterworth might have been provoked into defining the duties of a housekeeper to a bachelor. Instead, she listened to instructions, put on an overall, got out her disinfectants and prepared to clean Mary Ellen and to burn her clothes with a placid competence which asserted that she was not to be overcome by any freak of Walter's, no matter how eccentric.

"If she's to go into the spare bed," she said, "she'll go clean."

No need to dwell on happenings in the bathroom; they were there for a long time, and when Mary Ellen came out, wrapped in a night-dress of Mrs. Butterworth's, she felt raw from head to foot. But she had two satisfactions which sent her very happily to sleep in spite of her rawness. One was bread and milk in quantity, the other was the assurance she derived from the looking-glass that if her parents saw her, they would not recognize her. Her voice had been an asset to her parents who had been therefore not so indifferent to the existence of their Mary Ellen as her story had suggested.

Mrs. Butterworth returned to the sitting room. "She's in bed," she reported.

"Thank you," said Walter and then, by way of explanation, added, "She can sing."

"I thought it would be that," she said.

"Yes, yes, it is quite extraordinarily that. Did I make it clear to you that she will live here?"

"I'll keep her clean," said Mrs. Butterworth, shouldering the burden.

"And she had better be described as my niece, from, let us say, Oldham. You will buy her clothes to-morrow. Her name is Mary. We will call her Mary Pate."

"It's a good name to take risks with," she warned him.

"Wait till I've taught her how to sing."

"Oh, aye," she said, with seeming skepticism; but she was not skeptical. She accepted Mary, she believed in her because Walter believed in her and because his belief was so strong that he bestowed on her the name of Pate. That settled, for Mrs. Butterworth, that Mary was remarkable.

Walter himself was doubtful if he was justified in sharing his name with her. It was an honored name in Staithley, but when Mary Ellen soared she would cast luster on the name she bore, and he questioned if he were not high-handedly appropriating that luster to his name. But on other grounds, of convenience, of propriety (a singing master had to be circumspect), of cover from the possible quest of bereft parents, he decided she had better be Pate.

Why, it Italianized into Patti! He hadn't thought of that before, but it seemed a good omen and before he went to bed that night he had planned in full his scheme for the education of a pupil who did not merely come to him for lessons while spending the rest of her time out of his control, but of one who from her uprising to her retiring should be ordered by him to the single end that she should be a great singer.

No one but a bachelor, and a Mrs. Butterworth-spoiled bachelor at that, would have imagined that a system so drastic, and so monastic, would prove workable, but at

first Mary Ellen was docile. She had gone without creature comforts for too long not to appreciate them when she had them, and she was docile through her fear of losing them, of being sent back to Jackman's Buildings or of being dragged back by her parents. Their beat, certainly, was not her beat now, and the almost suburban street in which she had been singing when Walter heard her was well away from the Staithley Beggar's Mile. But there were always off-chances (such as her own coming there), and perhaps she knew or perhaps she did not know that she was one of those people who can be seen across a wide road by the short-sighted: a quality she had of which there is no particular explanation except that it is one of the Almighty's conjuring tricks, performed for the ugly as compensation for their ugliness and for the beautiful because to them that hath shall be given.

At any rate, so long as she feared the clutch of her past she subdued her rebelliousness to the discipline of study, and all too soon he was treating her companionably, he was letting her into the secret of the ambition he had for her, he was assuming that because he knew the necessity of a long, arduous training, she would reasonably submit to it.

But her submissiveness to his regimen passed with the passing of her fears. She trusted the disguise of clothes, of the manner she acquired and of speech, which was no longer that of Jackman's Buildings, to confound the Bradshaws even if she met them face to face and as confidence grew her motive for acquiescence in much that his system implied was weakened. It implied, especially, the secreting of her talent until he deemed it ripe for exhibition, and Mary Ellen grew impatient.

Perhaps he had not clearly stated his ambition or perhaps she had not clearly understood, but while he expected her to be a pupil long after her Staithley days

were past, she was not looking beyond Staithley, she was not seeing why work should be continuous now that it had ceased to be a new sensation. She was avid of results and grew sullen at her labor which seemed to lead nowhere but to more labor.

He consulted Mrs. Butterworth: was Mary Ellen ill?

"Ill? She's got horse-strength, but you can over-drive a horse. All work and no play is good for nobody."

"She goes to concerts," he protested.

"That's part of her work, and part of her trouble, too. Going and hearing others sing and you telling her to watch them and to learn what to avoid, and she fancying she's better than they are, an' all."

"She is better."

"Then it doesn't help her to know it and to know they sing in public and she doesn't."

"She shan't sing yet. What am I to do?"

"Take her mind off it. It's always concerts. There are theaters."

There were. There was one in Staithley (there was even, depth below the deep, a music-hall), but the feeling existed that if playgoing was done at all it should be done furtively and though Walter would not have dreamed of putting music and drama in two categories the one labeled respectable and the other disreputable, he had to defer to the prejudices of those who did. He lived by teaching music and singing to the offspring of Staithley's upper ten, and there might be tolerance amongst them, but he had to be on the safe side and to take the view that the theater was a detrimental place. This was self-protective habit which recently had crystallized into something approaching conviction through the action of one Chown. The crime of Mr. Chown, and to Walter it was no less than crime, was to translate the Staithley Hand Bell Ringers to the music-halls, where they had made

much money by (Walter held) debasing their musical standards. But the music-hall was not the theater and he had to admit, on reflection, that there was really no connection between Mr. Chown's vulgarization of the musical taste of the Staithley Hand Bell Ringers and Mary Ellen's going to the play. There was Shakespeare and if it was prudent for him not to go with her himself, there was Mrs. Butterworth, who stood awaiting his decision with a notable and not disinterested anxiety.

It was not disinterested because the slave had her relaxation, her weekly "night out" when she threw the shackles off and forgot in the pit of the Theater Royal that she was housekeeper, valet, nurse and mother to Walter Pate. Not his to ask nor his to tell what delicious freedom she found in those emancipated hours, but hers the hope to add to them when she cunningly prescribed the theater as a cure for Mary Ellen's restiveness.

"Would you go with her?" he asked shyly, his tone implying that now, if never before, he was her petitioner.

"If you wish it," she said, exulting secretly. "I'm sure she needs a change."

So, Shakespeare conveniently arriving at Staithley in the hands of a troupe of actors of heroic good intentions, Mary Ellen went to fairyland with Mrs. Butterworth who proved, however, when she had grown used to sitting on a plush chair in the circle instead of on a hard bench in the pit, an unromantic guide. Mary was lost with Rosalind in Arden and Mrs. Butterworth took advantage of the interval to parade her knowledge of the private concerns of the actors. It was, for the most part, a recital of the sycophantic slush handed by the advance agent to the office of the *Staithley Evening Reporter*, and printed each Friday unedited. She knew how Jacques and Phoebe, though they only met when this tour began, had been

married last week at Huddersfield, and what difficulties had been overcome to secure legal marriage for a pair of strolling players who only stayed in a town for a week. And she knew where Rosalind lodged in Staithley. Mary did not find this disenchanting: for her it linked fairyland with Staithley. Rosalind was not a dream, mysterious, impalpably detached from life, but a real woman lodging in a street which Mary Ellen knew: she walked the pavements in skirts when she wasn't ruffling it in doublet and hose, bewitching young Orlando in a glamorous wood, and if Rosalind why not, some magical day, Mary Ellen? She gasped at her audacity, at the egregious fantasy of leaping thought. She was earth-bound by Staithley, and these were the fetterless imaginings of a freer world.

She couldn't and she didn't look beyond Staithley, and the stage seemed something so remotely beyond her reach that she hid her thought, even from herself. She had the trick, when chocolate came her way, of getting on a chair and of putting the packet on the top of her wardrobe, hoarding it not too long but long enough to make her feel nobly conscious of severe self-restraint. So with this thought of the stage: she put it, wrapped in silver paper, at the top of her mental wardrobe, not wholly inaccessible, but difficult of access, not forgotten but put where it was not easy to remember it. But it had all the same its reactions and the chief of these operated in a manner precisely contrary to Walter's intentions when he allowed her to go to the play. "She shan't sing yet," (in public, that is) he had said decidedly to Mrs. Butterworth, and Mary Ellen, if she admitted doublet and hose to be, for her, the fabric of a dream, was spurred by that impossible to demand her possible, to demand her right to wear an evening dress and in it to appear upon a platform and to sing in public.

"Not yet," he said. "Not for a long while yet."

"Oh, Daddy Pate, I can't wait for ever."

"Nobody's asking you to. But you'll wait till you're ready."

"How long?"

"Some time. Years."

"Years? But you told Mr. Bradshaw I was to sing in the 'Messiah.' I've been learning it."

"You heard that? That night you came? Well, it was a foolish boast of mine. You practiced it as you have practiced other things, for the groundwork on which you'll build."

"You mean I'm not good enough. Then why have you told me I'm good?"

"You're too good to spoil."

"But I'm spoiling now."

"No: you're learning."

She cried piteously and when, surprisingly, that did not move him, she sulked and refused to eat and managed to make herself so unwell that work was out of the question and Mrs. Butterworth was guilty of disloyalty to Walter.

"She'll fret herself into a decline," she said. "You'd best give way to her."

"She'll damage her voice if this goes on," he had to admit. "Can't you talk sense to her?" and Mrs. Butterworth, swinging back to her allegiance, promised she would try, but her talking was to ears that were deaf. Mary Ellen, appealed to in the name of gratitude she owed Walter, was stubbornly unmoved. "I was better off in the streets," she said. "I sang. People heard me."

Mrs. Butterworth held up her hands in scandalized protest. "Oh, dearie!" she said, incapable of more.

"Why am I kept down like this?" demanded Mary Ellen.

"Mr. Pate knows best."

"He knows he's got me in prison. He thinks he can

amuse himself by trying his experiments on me. His perfect system that has never been tried before! No, because nobody would stand it, so he picked me off the street to have me to try it on because he thought I was helpless. He doesn't care about me. I'm not a girl. I'm not human flesh and blood. I'm a thing with a voice that he's testing a system on, and he thinks I'll let him go on testing till he's tired of it. Years, he said. Years in a prison! Years, while he bribes me to stand it by making lying promises—"

"Oh! he never!" said Mrs. Butterworth, stung to defend Walter, though secretly in sympathy with much of her passionate distortion of his motives.

"He did! He said I was to sing solo in the 'Messiah' and now he says I shan't. He isn't tired of his experiments yet."

"I'm sure he means it for your good."

"Yes. Father's licked me saying that and loving — I'm being kept down for his pleasure and I'm tired if he isn't. I'm going back to the streets."

"That's foolish talk, Mary."

"I'm going to sing somewhere. That may be foolish, but it's fact."

"Well, I'll tell him. Now eat your breakfast."

"No," said Mary Ellen, hunger-striker, and Mrs. Butterworth reported a total failure in guarded misquotation of the rebel. "I can put bacon before her, but I cannot make her eat. And she'll run away. She will, as sure as eggs are eggs, and you'll lose her then. We can't lock her up."

"No." Walter mused upon the authority of a foster-father, clamping his anger down, recognizing the weakness of his position. He was not her guardian; he had no reason to suppose that her parents were alive or that any one had better right than he had to command her,

but he had assumed possession of Mary Ellen as if she were a kitten and a girl was not a kitten. He could only rule by the consent of the ruled, and he thought he had earned her consent. He had given her so much—even, treating her as of discreet age, his confidence—and he had thought she had responded, he had thought she had reasonably understood what he was doing and why. But if she put it that he was simply a tyrant, there was nothing to do but to humor her till, in time, she saw indisputably that he was right. To let her go, to lose what had been so well begun, was unthinkable.

Mrs. Butterworth, sensitive to Walter's suffering, broke in upon his thoughts. "I'd like to whip the thankless brat," she said viciously, and if she was hinting at a policy it might have been a sound one. But Walter was not thinking whether Mary Ellen was or was not still of whip-pable age, he was going back, whimsically, to his beginnings with her, he was thinking how he had said to Tom, "If she goes on to where I'm seeing her, she'll wipe her boots on me." The boot-wiping had begun before he looked for it; that was all except that it was his system on which she wiped her boots, his system off which she rubbed the bloom.

He went to Mary, still staring at her uneaten meal, with a compromise. "I think you might sing this season with the Choral Society, Mary," he said, "attending their practices and appearing in public when they appear."

"Daddy Pate," she said, "I didn't mean to be a nuisance, but I had to make you see it. The Choral Society? That means just in the chorus."

"Well, for this season, Mary."

"But the 'Messiah'? You promised me."

"Oh, hardly. But we shall see, Mary. We shall see." And knowing that she had got him, so to speak, with his

foot on the butter-side, she kissed him very sweetly and then, to show him what a practical, commonsensical person she really was, she sat down to breakfast. "And I don't mind," she said, "if the bacon is cold," and ate, magnanimously.

CHAPTER IV

MR. CHOWN OF LONDON

THE best that could be said about the Wheatsheaf Hotel at Staithley Bridge was very good indeed; it was that when a certain eminent actor-manager was appearing in Manchester, he put up at the Wheatsheaf in Staithley and motored in and out. It is thirty miles each way, there is a Midland Hotel in Manchester, and actor-managers know all there is to know about personal comfort. That places the Wheatsheaf.

It was Staithley's sporting hotel, and golf club-houses, not to mention the habit of golfers of motoring to their sport, have dispelled the illusion that sportsmen are a hardy race. The Wheatsheaf had its crowded hour when the visiting teams of professional footballers who came to oppose Staithley Rovers arrived in a charabanc, and attracted customers, who paid reckless prices for drinks in a place where they could get near views of authentic heroes: but for the most part, solid, quiet comfort was the keynote of the Wheatsheaf and commercial travelers knew it.

Those of them who were not victims of the falling status of the traveler, and the too closely scrutinized expense accounts, went to the Wheatsheaf; the others envied them and went where they could afford to go. The uninstructed Londoner would have passed it by without a second glance; the Wheatsheaf did not advertise. It was inno-

cent of gilt, and its whisky was unwatered. It was a very good hotel.

Nevertheless, Mr. Alastair Montagu, who always stayed there when his company was at the Theater Royal, was surprised to see Lexley Chown in the smoking room of the Wheatsheaf. He remembered the eminent actor-manager, and his surprise was not that Chown, being in Staithley, should have the discrimination to stay at the Wheatsheaf, but that Chown should be in Staithley. Chown was a figure in the profession, but emphatically a London figure.

The business of Mr. Chown was that of an "artiste's agent." A middleman trading in human flesh and blood? Perhaps; but Chown was a useful clearing-house. He was an impressive person, floridly handsome, beautifully dressed, and the routine work which kept him and the expensively rented, exquisitely furnished suite of offices near Leicester Square was something like this. A manager would ring up and say that by to-morrow he must have a snub-nosed actor, six feet tall, with red hair and a cockney accent to play a part worth seven pounds a week. Mr. Chown, or Mr. Chown's secretary, consulted the card index and, by its means, collected half a dozen unemployed actors who answered, roughly, to the manager's specification, and sent them to see the manager, who might choose one of them but more probably would not. He would probably ring up and say, "I say, Chown, I've looked over this bunch. Not one of them a bit like it." Chown would reply, truthfully, that each of his applicants had a snub nose, red hair, was six feet high and a cockney who was prepared to act for seven pounds a week, and that these were the qualifications the manager had demanded. The manager would not deny it, but "I had a brain-wave last night. Billy Wren is the man I want for that part. He was born to play it, only," pathetically, "I don't know

where he is." "I do," Mr. Chown would say calmly. "He's in 'The Poppy Plant,' which is at Eastbourne this week and at Torquay next week." "Get him out of that for me, old man." "I'll try, but Billy is five feet six, his hair is black and he's got a Roman nose." "I don't care: I want him." "And his salary is sixteen." "Who cares?" Billy would be wired for, cajoled into giving up the certainty of his tour for the uncertainty of a London run, his touring manager would be placated with a substitute at half Billy's salary, and the London Manager would pay Mr. Chown precisely nothing for these services. Did Mr. Chown, then, help lame dogs over stiles for nothing? Not at all: he received ten per cent of the actor's salary for the first ten weeks of a run, from the actor. His brains and his system were at the service of the manager, but it was the actor who paid all while receiving certainly not more than the manager who paid nothing, not even compliments to Mr. Chown on the astonishing efficiency of that compilation of many years, his card index.

That was the bread and butter work of Mr. Lexley Chown, but his portly form was not nourished on Lenten fare, nor was his wine bill paid out of his card index. He was an industrious seeker after talent buried in the English provinces; he had the flair—not the nose, for, remarkably, Mr. Chown was not a Jew—for discovering young people of merit whose market value, under intelligent handling, would in a few years be in the neighborhood of a hundred pounds a week. It is a profitable thing to be sole agent of a number of people each earning a hundred pounds a week.

When business was good—and Staithley was a good "No. 2" town—Mr. Alastair Montagu was capable of believing what his posters asked the public to believe about the merits of his company, but in his most optimistic, his

most characteristically showmanlike mood, he could not persuade himself that Lexley Chown had come from London to Staithley looking for stars of the future amongst the sprightly old women and elderly young men of "The Woman Who Paid" company. There was old Tom Hall, of course, a sound actor who ought to be in London, but Chown knew all about Tom, and about Tom's trouble, too. Whisky drinkers on Tom's scale weren't Chown's quarry, nor, indeed, he reflected, were sound actors either. To be a "sound actor" is to be damned with faint praise and a mediocre salary. No: Chown must be after something at the music-hall, and Montagu had "popped in" the other evening without seeing anything extraordinary. But that was just it, with Chown. There was nothing extraordinary about the people he discovered until after he discovered them; then every one saw how extraordinary they were.

Chown, shaking Montagu's hand and bending over it with an inclination of the body which seemed derived from Paris rather than London, was merely Chown not differentiating between this unimportant touring manager and the great ones of the earth who paid high salaries to established reputations. But Mr. Montagu was flattered, he had a fine capacity for flattery.

"My dear Montagu, I'm delighted," said Mr. Chown. "You will honor me by dining with me? They have a Chablis here that really is not unworthy of your acceptance."

It was flattering to be thought a connoisseur of wine, and Chown had skillfully mentioned a wine that couldn't go beyond Montagu's *savoir vivre*, instead of the more esoteric drinks of his own preferring. Yet Mr. Chown, taking trouble to secure a guest, wanted nothing of Montagu but his company. The theater is at once convivial and self-insulating. Chown hated solitude, and though

there were hail-fellow-well-met commercial travelers in the hotel whose conversation would have been a tonic, he preferred the limited Mr. Montagu. Erroneously, Mr. Chown despised commercial travelers.

Mr. Montagu, in gratitude, decided to give Mr. Chown a hint. Mr. Chown was in evening dress.

"I am glad to hear," said Mr. Chown, who had heard nothing at all, "that you are having excellent houses."

The houses were no better than Montagu's inexpensive company deserved. "I am not," he confessed, "doing musical comedy business. Still, they have a feeling for the legitimate here. Staithley's a good town, if," he added, trying to give his kindly hint, "it isn't dressy."

"No. I suppose one mustn't judge these people by their clothes. They don't put their money on their backs in the North. They've more left to spend on the theater, Montagu."

"And the music-hall."

"Ah! You feel the competition?"

"I wasn't meaning that. Look here, Chown, are you coming in to see my show to-night?"

"Well—" Mr. Chown's whole anatomy, as seen above the table, was apology incarnate.

"No. You're not. I didn't think it and that's why I didn't ask at once. It's some one at the Palace you've come to see, isn't it?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Well, there's nothing else in Staithley." The theater is self-insulating. "And you haven't come here for your health. But, if you'll excuse my saying it, they don't dress for the theater, let alone the Palace, and if you go there as you are, they'll throw things at you from the gallery."

"Montagu, I shan't forget this kindness," said Chown.

"You put me under obligation to you. But—did you never hear of an Eisteddfod?"

"Is it a new act on the halls?" asked Mr. Montagu, who did not rapidly clear his mind of an obsession.

Mr. Chown smiled. "Not yet," he said, but "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," he thought, mentally filing an idea for future reference.

"Wait a moment," said Mr. Montagu. "Why am I thinking of Lloyd George?"

"Because of a natural association of ideas. Staithley Eisteddfod, however, is a Lancashire occasion with a Welsh label that hasn't much to do with it. You may recall the Hand Bell Ringers who were on the halls some years ago. I picked them up at Staithley Eisteddfod. It's a sort of competitive festival of song, and if I were not dressed, I should not be admitted to the stalls."

Staithley was, so to speak, on Montagu's beat, and it was not on, obviously, Chown's. Yet here was Chown telling Montagu something about Staithley quite material to his business, which he did not know. Staithley Eisteddfod did not advertise: the largest hall in the town was too small to hold the friends of the competitors, let alone the hardly more dispassionate public, and Chown had his ticket for the stalls because he was a subscriber to the funds. Short of theft, it was the only way by which one could become possessed of a ticket.

He did not add, though he knew, that Montagu's second-rate company with their third-rate play was at the Staithley Theater Royal that week because more alert managers, with better attractions, steered clear of the place in that week of musical ferment, and the resident theater manager had to take what he could, by diplomatic silence, get. One lives and learns and Mr. Montagu would learn that week without a living wage; his moderate houses belonged with the early, pre-Eisteddfod nights of

the week and though only the favored few would crowd into the Eisteddfod Hall, the rest of Staithley, hot partisans of the performers, watched and waited.

Music is music in Lancashire.

"Ah," said the innocent Mr. Montagu, "if it's music, and dressed at that, it'll not affect me at the theater."

"Let me fill your glass," said Mr. Chown. "What's your opinion of the cinemas?"

Mr. Montagu was of the opinion, current in 1912, that the cinemas were of no account. Revolutions in the making are apt to go unperceived by their contemporaries. Chown was less insular, but "Imagine," he said, "the strangled emotions of the young man in the stalls who desires a woman he sees on the cinema and then realizes she is a shadow on a screen." They finished dinner on a genially Rabelaisian note.

Chown chose this, the first evening of the Eisteddfod, because there were to be no Hand Bell Ringers and no instrumentalists: there was choral singing and there were soloists. He was going to hear Choral Societies from all over Lancashire sing, one after the other, the same chorus from "King Olaf," and he was going to hear soloists, one after the other, sing the same song. It was, on the face of it, the dullest possible way of spending an evening, yet the packed audience in Staithley Drill Hall considered themselves privileged to be there. The official judges who were Walter Pate and two others (which meant, for practical purposes, Walter Pate alone) sat screened off from view of the performers, lest prejudice should mar the fairness of their decisions. They heard but did not see.

The audience heard and saw, and the singers were not numbers to them but "our Annie" or "our Sam" or "our lot fra' Blackburn" and so on. Local feeling ran high under an affection of cool discrimination and broke out in wild applause, intended to influence the judges' verdict,

coming, curiously localized, from parts of the hall where adherents had gathered together in the belief that union is strength. But they were, one and all, susceptible to fine shades of singing; they didn't withhold applause from a fine rendering because the singers were of some other district than their own. Local patriotism was disciplined to their musical appreciations.

Mr. Chown, of London, had ceased, as an annual visitor, to be surprised by this musical cockpit, where not money but taintless glory was the prize. They competed for the honor of their birthplaces, and for the privilege of holding a "challenge shield," inscribed with the winners' names, until the next contest. He had ceased even to wonder at that drastic rule of an autocratic committee imposing evening dress upon the occupants of the front seats and at its phenomenal results. He was a worker in research, he was scientifically unemotional about the motive of his research, but he was on fertile ground here, and if he drew blank at Staithley Eisteddfod, then Lancashire was not the county he took it for.

Yet his was not the point of view of Mr. Pate, and the capacity to sing was the least of the qualities for which he looked. To a sufficing extent, the capacity would be present in all of to-night's competitors, even in those who sang only in chorus, and what Mr. Chown was looking for was best indicated by the algebraic symbol, X . He couldn't, himself, have defined the quality he sought. The reflection of Mr. Montagu about the actor Tom Hall may be recalled. Tom Hall was a sound actor, lacking X . If there is a word for X , it is personality. Good looks went for something, and so did the evident possession of either sex but the whole of X depended neither upon good looks nor upon sex, and was a mystery of the stars whom Mr. Chown, with his trustworthy flair, discovered before they were stars. Technique could be acquired, and Mr.

Chown did not condemn technique, but *X* was and it was not possible to acquire it. Add *X* to technique and the result was a hundred pounds a week: technique without *X* was Tom Hall, "The Woman Who Paid" and the whisky of conscious failure in life.

He sat down with a silent prayer that an *X* performer would appear on the platform and that he might not repeat his poignant disappointment of last year when he had found an unmistakable *X* only to learn that its possessor was a Wesleyan who looked upon a theater door as the main entrance to hell. "But you're a great artist," he had told her and "I'm a Christian woman," she had replied and left him frustrated.

His program informed him that the first part of the evening would be occupied by choral singing, and he settled himself on a spartan chair to await, with what patience he might, the turn of the soloists. There were ten choirs on the program; at least two hours of it, he reckoned, but Mr. Chown was no quitter and the zeal of the conductors and the rusticity of the choirs' clothing might be trusted to afford him some amusement. And yet he flagged; the monotony was drugging him, and the Wheatsheaf had done him very well. . . .

Had he slept? That was the question he asked himself as he saw the girl. Had he slept through the choral and perhaps half of the solo singing? He sat up sharply, and, as he did so, realized that a full choir was on the platform. But his first impression had been that the girl was alone, and, even now, he found it difficult to see that there were thirty-nine other people with her.

She eclipsed them. "She's got it," he prevented himself with difficulty from shouting aloud—and Mr. Chown was no easy prey to enthusiasm. Still, a girl who could wipe out thirty-nine other people, who could glow uniquely in a crowd! "Put her on a stage," he was thinking, "and

they'll feel her to the back row of the gallery." He noted as additional facts, accidentals but fortifying, that she had youth and good looks. He tried, honestly, to fix his attention on a large-headed man in the choir who had a red handkerchief stuck into his shirt-front, and a made-up tie that had wandered below his ear. The fellow was richly droll, but it was no use: the girl drew him back to her. He tried again, with an earnest spinsterish lady who looked strong-minded enough for anything: and the girl had him in the fraction of a minute. "She'll do," he thought—"if she hasn't got religion," he added ruefully. "Number seven—Staithley Bridge Choral Society," he read on his program. That was a simplification, anyhow: the girl must live in Staithley.

They were the home choir, Staithley's own, and the applause was long, detaining them in embarrassed acknowledgment on a platform they vehemently wished to quit, but Mr. Chown, making for the pass-door under cover of the applause, observed that there was no embarrassment about the girl. "Um," he thought, "no nerves. They're better with them. Well, one can't have everything." At the pass-door, a steward stood sentinel. "Press," said Mr. Chown with aplomb, using an infallible talisman, and the sentinel made way for him.

When the verdict was announced, the winning choir was to appear again on the platform to sing a voluntary and to receive acclamations and the challenge shield. Meanwhile, the whole four hundred contestants were herded together in the Drill Hall cellarage and Mr. Chown added himself inconspicuously to their number. Mistaken, as he hoped to be, for a Staithleyite just come off the platform, he found beer pressed fraternally upon him, and, heroically, he drank. Self-immolation and research are traditional companions. He felt that the beer had made him one of them, but could not withhold a backward glance

at the vanity of West End tailoring. When he had said "Press" to the steward at the pass-door he had wondered if his costly cut were plausible and now that same cut was blandly accepted amongst the nondescript swallowtails of this unconforming mob. But he welcomed their inappreciation; he wanted to make the girl's acquaintance first as one of themselves.

A press of women came down the stairs into the cellar and Mary Ellen was with them but not of them. They chattered incessantly, excitedly, letting taut nerves relax in a spate of shouted words; she was silent, unmoved by the ordeal of the platform and the applause, nursing her sulky, secret resentment of Walter Pate who had refused to let her compete amongst the soloists. Mr. Pate was guarding his treasure against premature publicity; he was guarding her, specifically, against Mr. Chown, that annual raider who had so damnably ruined the Staithley Hand Bell Ringers by taking them to the music-halls; he hid her in the Choral Society and he underrated Mr. Chown's perceptiveness.

She had taken many things from Walter Pate—the good food which had so unrecognizably developed her, with the physical exercises he prescribed, from a sexless child into a woman of gracious curves; the good education, the good musical instruction; the good beginnings of every kind; and in return she gave him work. He was almost certain of her now: the tin was gone from her golden voice and when he let his hoarded secret loose upon the world he knew that, under God, he would be making a great gift to the concert-platform. He would give a glorious voice, perfectly trained, and perhaps more than that. But the more was still only "perhaps." "Art," he had said, "is unguessable" and it remained unguessable. But, "she's not awakened yet," he thought, and hoped for a time when her voice would be more than well-produced.

It lacked color, warmth, feeling, but she was young and, meanwhile, he was doing his possible. It was the hardest thing to keep her back from public trial, both because of the girl herself and because of Tom Bradshaw, who was paying half her costs and didn't share Walter's faith. But they must wait, they must all wait, and if two years were not long enough they must wait longer.

Mr. Pate, who looked upon her as the great servant he would give to music, was screened away in the judges' box: Mr. Chown, who looked upon her as an income, watched Mary Ellen take her cloak from a long row hanging on the wall and go towards the stairs she had just descended.

Evidently, she was for a breath of air and he thought it would be a shrewd air on his bare head, but the opportunity of private conversation was too good to be missed and he awaited her return at the foot of the stair.

"Oh, you are going out?" he said. "So'm I. It's hot in here." He modified the Gallicism of his bow.

"Yes," she said, consenting to his escort. She knew, better than he did, that the sort of boisterous crowd which awaits the declaration of an election result was assembled round the Drill Hall; it would be convenient to have this big man with her to shoulder a way through it.

Their clothes stamped them as competitors and the crowd gave passage. Evening dress was licensed in Staithley that night, but his arm was agreeably protective till they were through the crush; then he withdrew it.

"I'm glad to be out of that," he said.

"There's too much crowd to-night," said Mary Ellen.

"Ah, you feel that, do you?"

"Choral singing!" she said, with immense disgust.

"Yes, indeed. It does make one feel one of a crowd. I've often wondered, in my own case, if I shouldn't have done better to have gone on the stage."

She looked him over. "Well," she said, "I suppose you weren't always fat. It's too late now."

Mr. Chown swallowed hard. "Yes, for me," he said. "Not for you. Would you care to go on the stage if the chance came?"

"Would a duck swim?"

Ducks, he thought, more often drowned than swam on the stage; that was why there was always so much room at the top. "It's very hard work," he said.

"I'm not afraid of work," she said, and then remembered her grievance, "if I can see it leading anywhere. Work that only leads to singing with the crowd isn't funny."

"Oh, I can do better than that for you."

"You can? You?"

"If you will work. If, for instance, you will get rid of your Lancashire accent."

"Tha' gornless fule," she said, "if tha' doan't kna' th' differ 'atween Lankysheer an' t'other A'll show thee. Me got an accent? Me that's worked like a Fury these last two years to lose my accent? Let me tell you I've had the best teachers in Staithley and—"

"Yes," he interrupted. "The difference is amazing. I realize how you must have worked. It is only a question now of, so to speak, a finishing school. The best teachers in Staithley are, after all, Staithley teachers. I am thinking of London and perhaps not so much of conscious work as unconscious imitation of the speech of the people who are around you."

"London!" she said. "London! Who are you?"

"I'm a well-known theatrical agent, and I became well-known by making the right people famous. You are one of the right people, but there is work before you. You can't act yet. You have it all to learn, acting, dancing—"

"Not all," she said. "I can sing."

"In a Choral Society," he said.

"You go and ask Walter Pate," she said, professing a faith in Walter's judgment which might, in her circumstances, have been to her credit, but that all Staithley shared that faith.

All Staithley and Mr. Chown who was at once impressed by her giving Walter Pate so confidently as reference for her abilities. "Does Mr. Pate believe in you?" he asked.

"Ask him yourself. Ask him why he keeps me and teaches me and when he's told you that, ask him a question for me. Ask why he wouldn't let me go in for the solo competition to-night when he says I'm to sing solo in the 'Messiah' at Christmas, and if you get the answer to that, tell me, for I don't know."

Chown thought he could tell her without asking, and marked, gladly, her bitterness. If Pate was training this girl, it was because he believed in her. Pate did not take all who came, and wasted no time on fools, but he had not let her sing as a soloist to-night, though she was to sing "The Messiah" in a few months. Why? Because to-night was Chown's night for being in Staithley and Pate was afraid of Chown. Pate (the dog) had found something in this girl and was keeping it to himself. He imagined he had hidden her safely in that choir, did he? But old Chown had the flair, Chown had spotted the girl's possession of something Pate did not know her to possess. Pate only knew she had a voice: Chown knew she had the stuff in her that stars were made of. Certainly her voice, a Pate-approved, Pate-produced voice, put an even better complexion on the matter than Chown had suspected; it meant that here was immediate, and not merely future, exploitability. She was ripe at once for musical comedy on tour and when she had shed her accent and picked up some

tricks of the trade, he would stun London with her—if he could filch her from the wary Mr. Pate.

He did not think of it, precisely, as filching, because his conscience was quite clear that he, being Chown, could do immensely more for her than Pate. Pate would be thinking of the salary of a musical comedy star. Pate would do her positive damage by over-training her up to some impossible standard ridiculously above the big public's head; and the big public was the only public that counted. Mr. Chown saw himself, in all sincerity, as the girl's benefactor, if not as her savior.

A word of hers came back to him as a menace to his hopes. "Did I understand you to say that Mr. Pate keeps you?"

Mary Ellen nodded, and he felt he had struck a snag.

"You are a relative of his?"

"I'm not then. If you want to know, he found me singing in the streets."

"And was this long ago?"

"Getting on for two years."

Mr. Chown had the grace to feel a twinge: she was, beyond a doubt, Pate's property. But he recovered balance, telling himself very firmly that Pate would mismanage the property; that life was a battlefield and that "Vae Victis" was its motto; that one must live and that if Pate had taken reasonable precautions, he would not have exposed the girl to the marauding Mr. Chown. And, anyhow, Pate was a provincial.

He asked her age, and "Twenty-one," she said brazenly, aware of the trammels of minority. He guessed her eighteen at most, but she wasn't impossibly twenty-one and he had his reasons for believing her.

"You couldn't be a better age," he said. "I have some doubt as to what Mr. Pate will say to my proposal of the stage for you."

"Are you going to tell him about it?" she asked in alarm.

"I will tell you," he said, "now. If you come with me to-morrow to London, you can begin at once in a musical comedy on tour." She gave a gasp. "Oh," he said, "you wish to hear no more. You are anxious to return to the Drill Hall. You are, perhaps, cold?" He was very cold, but not too cold to play his fish.

"Cold? I could listen all night to this." Mr. Chown envied her the undistinguished cloak she wore: *per ardua ad astra*.

"Well," he said, "it is true that the work I have to offer you is very different from the restrained, the almost caged existence you have been enduring. But you will begin in the chorus. You have stage fright to get over, and all the green sickness of a raw beginner. My friend Hubert Rossiter"—even Mary Ellen had heard of Rossiter—"will take you and I shall see that he passes you on from company to company. Soon you will play small parts, and then leading parts. Possibly, for experience, a pantomime at Christmas. And while you are learning your business in this way you will be paid all the time."

"How much?" she asked promptly.

"Exactly what you are worth," he said. "You won't starve and I call your attention to this point. I act as your agent and I take a ten per cent commission of your salary. That is all I take, and you will see that it is to my interests that your salary shall be large. If I did not believe that your salary in a very few years will be considerable, I should not be standing bareheaded and without a coat in a Staithley by-street. The train to London leaves at ten in the morning. Am I to take a ticket for you?"

"Yes," she said.

"It is a curious fact," he remarked, "that I do not know your name. Mine is Chown. Lexley Chown."

"Mine's Mary Ellen Bradshaw," she said, jettisoning the name of Pate as useless cargo now.

"Mary," he mused. "I think we'll keep the Mary. But we'll improve the rest. And now that you and I have settled this between ourselves, when do I see Mr. Pate?"

"He's very busy to-night," said Mary Ellen, "and the train leaves early to-morrow."

Mr. Chown looked hard at her, and she met his eye unflinchingly. It was perfectly understood between them that Walter Pate was a ladder by which she had reached a secure place. Having reached it, she could kick the ladder from her, and "Well," thought Mr. Chown, "she can do it to Pate, but I'm forewarned." He turned to go back to the Drill Hall expecting her to follow. She did not follow, she was gazing fixedly up the street in which they stood and when he returned, a trifle ill-tempered at being kept longer than need be in the chilling air, her remark was disconcerting.

The street ran uphill from the valley of the town, by daylight bleak and mean, each small house monotonously the repetition of its neighbor, but seen as she saw it now, blurred in the misty night, it led like an escape from man's sordid handiwork to the everlasting hills beyond. Dimly the rim of Staithley Edge showed as she raised her eyes, vague blackness obscurely massed beneath a gloomy sky, and above it floated the trail of smoke emitted from some factory-stack where the night stokers fed a furnace. Chimneys, the minarets of Staithley; stokers, the muezzins; smoke, the prayer. Somewhere wind stirred on the blemished moors and a fresher air blew through the street. Mary Ellen breathed deeply, greedily filling her lungs as if she feared that to go from Staithley was to dive into some strange element which would suffocate her unless she

had a stored reserve of vital air. But she was not thinking that.

Mr. Chown was watching her in some bewilderment. She brought her eyes down from Staithley Edge to the level of his face. "London's flat," asserted Mary Ellen.

"Not absolutely," he assured her.

"It's flat," she insisted. "I'm going to miss the Staithley hills."

It was right and proper for Mr. Chown, agent, to have his offices near Leicester Square and his beautifully furnished rooms in the Albany; but it was not right for Mary Ellen Bradshaw to adumbrate the instincts of the homing pigeon. In Mr. Chown's opinion, home was a superstition of the middle-classes, and if an artist was not a nomad at heart, the worse artist she.

He returned to his seat in the Drill Hall, with his bright certainty of Mary Ellen a trifle dimmed by her unreadiness to forget the Staithley hills, just as Walter Pate announced the judges' decision of the choral competition. Staithley Bridge were not the first; he faced an audience which was three parts Staithley and gave the verdict to another choir. It was wonderful proof of their opinion of Walter Pate that there was no disposition to mob the referee.

CHAPTER V

HUGH DARLEY'S HANDIWORK

IT is not to be gainsaid that Tom Bradshaw heard of the flight of Mary Ellen with relief. "I don't know if I'm a doubting Thomas: I'm sure I'm a doubting Quixote," had been his thought lately when he remitted Walter his half share of her expenses. He was very certain now that he was the one good Bradshaw, and whatever backward glances Walter might cast Tom closed the account of Mary Ellen with finality. He would neither see nor hear that young woman again. "I blame myself," he wrote to Walter. "She is a Bradshaw and I ought to have stopped your foolishness instead of going shares in it. I'll stop it now, though, and when you write of going to the police I say I won't have it. Forget her. (If it comes to police, owd lad, what price yon pair of white-slaving procurers, thee and me?). This man Chown that you say you suspect. I've made enquiries and there's nothing the matter with Chown. And if he looted her from us, who looted first? It's a blow to you, but honestly, Walter, better sooner than later and she would have cut and run when it suited her. She's a Bradshaw. Bar me, Bradshaws are muck."

Meanwhile, the organizer of victory was making first tactical moves in his Mary Ellen campaign. He made them in a spacious room whose admirable furniture suggested that this was the Holy of Holies of some eminent dealer in antiques until one noticed the large, floridly

signed photographs on the walls and the parti-colored advertising sheet which announced all West End attractions and contradicted crudely the Persian rugs on the floor: the private office of Mr. Hubert Rossiter, that elderly miracle of youthful dapperness whose queer high-stepping walk suggested, especially when he rehearsed a crowd of chorus-girls, nothing so much as a bantam-cock. He had developed, to an extraordinary degree, the knack of knowing what the public wanted and of fitting together, like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, incongruous parts that merged under his touch into the ordered whole of a popular entertainment. He wasn't, artistically, without scruple, but Hubert Rossiter with his two sweetstuff shops in town and his several touring companies in the country was a prophet of theatrical standardization: a safe man, with no highbrow pretensions about him, never short of other people's money for the financing of his productions.

Chown had been called into the Presence about a matter which might have caused friction on any other day. To-day, Chown wanted something of Rossiter and the threatening clouds dissolved in smiling sunshine. That affair settled, Chown took up his hat, then stopped.

"By the way, Hubert," he said, "whom would you say is the toughest stage manager you've got on tour?"

"There's Darley. Darley doesn't wear kid gloves. He's out with 'The Little Viennese.' I'm told they call that company 'The Little Ease.' "

"Just what I'm looking for. That's the South tour, isn't it?" asked Chown who did not want Mary Ellen to visit Staithley.

"Yes."

"Well, will you take a girl from me and put her in the chorus and ask Darley with my compliments to give her hell?"

"I conclude from this that you want to get back on

some one who's been pestering you to get a perfect lady on the stage."

"If I were not an honest man, I'd let you go on thinking that. But when she's had three months of Darley, I'm going to ask you to give her a part in another show and then a lead and—"

"My dear Lexley, you have only to command. I run my companies solely for your convenience."

"Seriously, Hubert, you can have first option on this girl at a hundred a week in town two years hence, and she'll be cheap at that. Would you like to see her now?"

"I hate looking at raw meat. What are her points?"

"She can sing."

Mr. Rossiter shrugged his shoulders. "She's nothing in my life for that," he said.

"She's got youth."

"Flapper market's depressed, Lexley. Give me experience all the time."

"Darley's seeing to the experience. I tell you, Hubert—"

"Oh, I know. The perfect Juliet. I'm always hearing of her. Never seen her yet." Mr. Rossiter pressed a bell, and the immediacy of the response suggested that Mr. Claud Drayton, who entered, lived up to the part for which he was cast, of Field-Marshal to the Napoleon, Rossiter. "Got her with you, Chown?" asked Rossiter.

"I did venture to bring her."

"You would. Drayton, Chown's got a girl here. Chorus in 'The Little Viennese' for three months. Maisie in 'The Girl from Honolulu' after that. Get reports and let me see them. That'll do. Good-by, Chown." He pressed another bell and a shorthand typist appeared as if by magic: he was dictating letters to her before Chown and Drayton had left the room. It was efficiency raised to the histrionic degree.

Drayton had eliminated surprise from his official life, but he couldn't restrain an instinctive gasp at the sight of Mary Ellen when Chown urbanely ushered her into his room. He gasped because she did not comply with, she violated, the first principle of an applicant for an engagement in the chorus. The first principle was that to apply with any chance of success for a job worth thirty-five shillings a week, you must wear visible clothing worth thirty-five pounds; and Mary Ellen was in the Sunday clothes of Staithley. Her costume was three seasons behind the fashions when it was new, her shoes were made for durability, and her hair-dressing made Mr. Drayton think of his boyhood, when he had gone to Sunday school. But he had his orders and here was Lexley Chown remarkably sponsoring this incredible applicant. He took out a contract-form. "Name? Sign here. The company's at Torquay. Report yourself at the theater to Mr. Darley to-morrow. You'll travel midnight. Show this in the office and they'll give you your fare." He fired it all at her almost without interval, sincerely flattering the manner in which his chief addressed him, and, as a rule, he flustered the well-dressed, experienced ladies he addressed. Here was one who was not experienced, who was dressed so badly that he thought of her as a joke in bad taste and, confound her, she was not flustered. She took the contract and the payment-slip from him calmly, eyeing him with a steady gaze which reduced his self-importance to the vanishing point. "Good-by. Good luck," he jerked at her with the involuntariness of an automaton.

She did not intend to seem disdainful; she was merely tired and the summary marching orders by a midnight train bewildered her. Mr. Chown, squiring her in her incongruous clothes from the Rossiter headquarters, thought he had reason to congratulate himself.

There was, first, the document, terrifyingly bespattered with red seals, which she had signed in his office. She might be a minor, but she had set hand and seal to the statement that she was legally of age and to the undertaking on the part of Mary Ellen Bradshaw, hereinafter known as the artiste and for professional purposes to be known as Mary Arden, to employ Lexley Chown as her sole agent at the continuing remuneration of ten per cent of her salary, paid weekly by the artiste to the agent. Formidable penalties were mentioned, two clerks witnessed their signatures with magisterial gravity and "Altogether," thought Mr. Chown, refraining from handing her a copy of their agreement, "if she shuffles out of that, she'll be spry."

There was, second, the compliance of Mr. Rossiter and the coming novitiate under Darley. Deliberately he had left her in her country clothes, trusting them to disguise in the Rossiter offices a quality he did not wish to be clearly apparent yet: deliberately, he had rushed her affair thinking all the while of Darley—or if not of him, of a Darley, of some crude martinet who was to lick her into shape. He wanted her ill-dressed, he wanted her bewildered. He wanted Darley to know how raw she was; he wanted hot fire for her and he saw her Staithley clothes acting upon Darley like compressed air on a blast furnace. The girl was too cool, she showed no nervousness. "Darley will teach you to feel, my girl," he thought: "I'm making your path short, but I don't want it smooth. Soft places don't make actresses. I'm cruel to be kind." And being kind he advanced her two pounds on account of commission, told her the station for Torquay was Paddington and left her on Rossiter's steps. He had exposed himself unavoidably to the lifted brows which could not help saluting the glossy Lexley Chown in the company of these obsolete clothes, but the necessity was past now.

and he lost no time in indicating to her that, for better or for worse, her future was in her own hands. He had other business to attend to.

Mary Ellen, who had surrendered herself confidingly to his large protectiveness, was braced by his departure. Their journey together, the wonder of lunching at a table in a train, the oppressiveness of offices—these were behind her now and she stood on Rossiter's busy steps breathing hard like a swimmer who comes to surface after a long dive. She breathed the air of London and looked from that office down a street across Piccadilly Circus, nameless to her. The whirl of it assaulted her; the swimmer was in the breakers now.

Mr. Rossiter's commissionaire, not unaccustomed to the sight of young women pausing distressfully on those steps where they had left their hopes behind them, addressed her with kindly intent. "Shall I get you a taxi, miss?"

"No, thanks," said Mary Ellen, who had noted the immense sums Mr. Chown had paid to the drivers of those vehicles. "I'll walk," and "others walk" she thought. "I can do what they can," and hardly set foot upon the London streets. Let that commissionaire perceive that Mary Ellen was afraid? Not she, and presently she was so little afraid that she asked the way to Euston of a policeman. Her suit-case—in strict fact, Mr. Pate's suit-case—was at Euston.

The man in the left luggage office at Euston was good enough to tell her the way to Paddington, but "You can't carry that," he said. "Why not?" said Mary Ellen, and carried it. The case was heavy and grew heavier: but there were stretches of her route, the part, for instance, between Tottenham Court Road and Portland Road, which revived her spirit. That might have been a bit of Staithley. London was flat; she had seen no reason in the slight rise of Shaftesbury Avenue to justify Mr.

Chown's qualifying "Not absolutely"; but there were sights and smells along the road to Paddington which she accepted gratefully as evidence of some affinity with Staithley. Piccadilly Circus was not the whole of London; one could breathe here and there, Praed Street way, in cheering shabbiness. She saw a barefoot girl, and a ragged boy offered to carry her bag. There was still a confused echo of the surging West End in her ears and she hadn't conquered London, but she had received comforting assurance that, in spots, London was habitable.

She fortified herself with tea at Paddington, remembered the night journey and bought buns at the counter, remembered the night journey again and slept in a waiting-room, cushioned on her bag, till it was nearly midnight. There was nothing in this precautionary garnering of sleep to prevent her from sleeping in the train, and her through carriage to Torquay was being shunted at Newton Abbot when she awoke and hungrily ate buns. Near Dawlish, she had the first sight in her life of the sea, and all the emotions proper to the child of an island race ought to have besieged her in the gray dawn. "It's big," she thought, grudging the sea the character of space, then turned her eyes inland to the cliffs. "They're small, but they're better than the sea." Not Staithley Edge, but elevation of a sort.

Mr. Hugh Darley, arriving at the theater at eleven o'clock, was told by the doorkeeper that a young lady was waiting for him.

"Been here long?" he asked, looking through Mary Ellen who stood in the passage.

"I came on duty when the night-watchman went off at nine. She was here then."

"More fool she," he said. "Got my letters there?" The doorkeeper had his letters, including one from Mr. Drayton.

Darley was a small man, with a shock of red hair and intensely blue eyes which gleamed sometimes with the light of an almost maniacal fury. It was this uncontrolled temper which kept him out of London: at his job, the job of infusing energy and "go" into bored chorus girls and of supplying spontaneity and drollery to comedians who had neither spontaneity nor drollery of their own, he was masterly when he kept his temper. A stage manager needn't suffer fools gladly, but he must suffer them suavely, he must hide his sufferings and must cajole when his every instinct is to curse, and Darley was a touring stage manager instead of a London "producer" because he simply could not roar them as 'twere any nightingale and London players were too well established not to be able effectually to resent his Eccles' vein: the strollers were not.

He read Drayton's letter through. "Where is she?" he asked.

"Why, here," said the doorkeeper.

"But," said Mr. Darley and then "Christ!" he cried, and bit through his pipe. That often happened: he carried sealing wax in his pocket for plugging the hole. "Comes to a theater at eight in the morning and dresses like a scullery maid's night out. What'll they send me next? I suppose you *are* what they've sent me? What's your name?"

"Mary Arden."

He consulted the advice note of these extraordinary goods. "That's right," he admitted. "Arden! Whom did you see as Rosalind?"

Mary Ellen blushed: he seemed to her to read her secrets. "And me a man that respects Shakespeare," he said. "There's one line of the Banished Duke you may remember. 'Sweet are the uses of adversity.' If you don't remember the line, you're going to, Miss Mary

Arden. You chose the name. I don't know that I don't choose to make you worthy of it."

"Oh, will you?" she cried.

"You've got no sense of humor," he said. "Come on the stage and we'll see what you have got. It'll be like going water-finding in the Sahara. Can you read music?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then be looking at those songs. There's a piano in the orchestra. I'm going down to it."

She was staring in amazement at the sheeted auditorium into which the unexpected rake of the stage seemed threatening to precipitate her. Vague masses hung over her head in the half-light seeming about to fall and crush her in the grisly loneliness to which she was abandoned as Mr. Darley went round to the orchestra. The diminished echoes of his footfalls were a wan assurance that this place, shunned by daylight as if it were a tomb, had contacts with humanity. But he had said it was the stage and however disconcerting she might find its obscure menace, the stage was where she wished to be and she was not to be put down either by it or by a little man who was rude about her best clothes, while he had not shaved that morning and his knickerbockers showed a rent verging on the scandalous. She had to sing to him and she expelled her terrors of her strange, her so alarmingly dreary surroundings, and strained her eyes to read the music he had put into her hands.

He seemed to bob up below her like a jack-in-the-box, and struck some chords on the piano. "Have you got that one?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, fighting her impulse to scream at the phenomenon of his sudden reappearance.

"Then let her go."

She sang the opening chorus of "The Little Viennese." "You've sung that before," he said, accusingly.

"Oh, no."

"Don't try to kid me. It won't pay. Read through the one you've got there marked 3." No. 3 was a new interpolation; she might know the rest, but she couldn't know No. 3. "Ready? Go on," and, in a minute, surprised, satisfied but by no means inclined to show his satisfaction other than by cutting the trial short, "That'll do, that'll do," he said resentfully. "This isn't the Albert Hall. What about your dancing?"

"I'm afraid I haven't danced yet," said Mary.

"You will," he said savagely, "and to my piping. I knew there was a catch in it somewhere," he thought, "but it comes to me that I've found a hobby for the rest of this tour. They don't often send me stuff that's worth working on.—I suppose you took the name of Arden because you've got a wooden leg," he jeered aloud.

Mary Ellen's face clouded, then an accomplishment of her street days came back to her. They were not, after all, so long ago. She pitched her hat into the wings and, reckless of the rake of the stage, turned rapid cartwheels.

"It's that sort of wood," she said, breathless but defiant.

"Thanks for the assurance," he said, "only this isn't a circus and your legs are wooden. They're wooden because you've no brains in them and till you have brains in your toes you're no use to me. You've got an accent that's as thick as pea-soup and till you've cleared it, it'll stay hidden in the chorus. If you'll work, I'll teach you to act but, by the Lord, you've work ahead of you. If I take trouble and you don't work, I'll flay you alive. Is that understood? Very well. There's a matinée to-day. You come in and see the show this afternoon and you see

it again to-night. You'll be sitting where I can see you and if I catch you laughing, I'll eat you. Leave laughing to the audience; it's their job. You're there to learn. Watch what the other girls do and when they do it. They'll love you because I'm calling a chorus rehearsal for you to-morrow. Make mistakes then if you dare. You'll play to-morrow night. See the wardrobe mistress between the shows to-day about your clothes. I'm paid to make you a chorus girl; you'll be in the chorus to-morrow night. Then I begin to have my fun with you. I begin to make your name something else than an impertinence. I get busy on you, my girl. You're clay and I'm the potter. Meantime, we'll go to the door and I'll tell the first girl who comes for her letters to show you where you're likely to find rooms and you can ask her why Hugh Darley proposes to spend four hours a day breaking in a chorus girl."

Mary asked the other girl, who looked curiously at her. "I never knew Darley to make love before," she said.

"Love!" said Mary, blinking startled eyes as if a flashlight had blazed at her out of darkness.

"Well," said her cynical friend, "when you've been more than five minutes on the stage, you'll know that the way to success lies through the manager's bedroom. Don't look at me like that. Down your nose. I'm not a success, I'm in the chorus running straight on thirty-five shillings a week, and there are more of us keep straight than don't."

Mary was not conscious that she had looked, fastidiously or otherwise, at her companion. She had a feeling of vertigo; she was thinking of herself, not of the other girl, and of this shameful threat before which she seemed to stand naked in her bones.

"We don't look after other people's morals," Dolly

Chandler assured her, "but you may care to know Darley's married."

"You think he meant—this?"

Dolly shrugged her shoulders. "He's a man."

"And he meant you to tell me what you are telling me?"

"You're pretty green, you know. I expect he thought I'd put you wise. Though I tell you again it's not like what I've seen of Darley to do the sultan stunt."

And in ordinary clothes she had turned cartwheels before this man! Mary Ellen blushed scarlet consternation.

Mr. Chown's thought, "Darley will teach you to feel," was taking rapid substance, but she must drive it from her, she must go to the theater and sit through two performances and memorize, memorize.

"That will do," said Darley after the rehearsal next day. "Miss Arden will stay behind. You can go on to-night," he told her as the rest went up the stairs. "You've got the tunes if you haven't got the words and they're damnfool enough not to matter though you'll know them by Saturday. You've got a clumsy notion of the movements, but you don't know how to move. Your idea of walking is to put one foot in front of the other. You're as God made you, but he's sent you to a good contractor for the alterations. He's sent you to me. Did you get Dolly Chandler to answer that question?"

She failed to meet his eye. Telling herself she was a coward, she tried and failed.

"I see," he said. "She answered it the way they'll all answer it. I'm going to put in four hours a day with you and Dolly's told you what they'll think of you. Thought's free and it's mostly dregs and I don't mind. What about you, Rosalind?"

"You mean it won't be true?" There was a hope and

she clutched at it with words that came unbidden to her lips.

"True?" he roared. "You—papoose, you whippet! Don't cry, you whelp. I asked you a question. I asked you if you mind their thoughts?"

"No," she said.

"Then we start fair," he said. "I'm having you on the stage and I'm coming to see you at your rooms, and if you'd like to know your name in this company, it's Darley's Darling. Only you and I'll know we meet for work, not play. I'm stage manager of a rotten musical comedy on a scrubby tour, but I'm a servant of the theater and I'll prove it on you."

He was, disinterestedly, the theater's servant, and service purged of self-interest is rare though there is plenty of voluntary work done in the theater. An actor rehearses for weeks and performs without fee in a special production: he may have an enthusiasm for the play he is to act, he may feel that such a play must, at all costs, come to birth, but somewhere self-interest lurks. The play may succeed at its special performance; it may be taken for a run, and, if not, the actor still has the hope that his acting will focus on him the attention of critics and managers. And if the part he plays is so incon siderable that he cannot hope to attract notice to himself, his hope is that the organizers of special productions will note him as a willing volunteer to be rewarded, next time, with a distinctive part.

For Darley, proposing to spend laborious hours in molding Mary Ellen, there was nothing concrete to be gained; no credit from the Rossiter headquarters and the positive loss of a reputation for asceticism which had been a shield against the advances of aspirants who believed that success in the theater was reached by the road Dolly had indicated to Mary. He did not flatter his company

by supposing that his reputation for austerity would survive association with Mary. But, intimately, he would have his incomparable gain, the matchless joy of the creative artist working on apt material.

"You can take the rest of this week in getting used to jiggling about in the chorus," he said. "Then we'll begin to work. Only you needn't despise musical comedy. There are as many great actresses who came out of a musical comedy training as out of Shakespeare. Perhaps for the same reason that white sheep eat more than black ones."

He drilled her on a dozen stages as the tour went on, in a dozen walks from the Parisian's to the peasant's ("You've never heard of pedestrian art," he said, "but this is it"), and for dancing, "You're too old, but we'll get a colorable imitation," and in her rooms they went through Rosalind and Juliet till she spoke the lines in English and made every intonation to his satisfaction. "Feel it, you parrot, feel it," was his cry, and he stopped his mockery of calling her Rosalind. He called her "Iceberg."

He had taken her far, very far, along the technical way, and he had come to a barrier. Where there was question of the grand emotions, her voice was stupid. She seemed intelligently enough to understand with her brain, but there was a lapse between understanding and expression. "I've done all I'm going to," thought Darley. "She's not an actress yet, she's only ready to be one when somebody breaks the eggs to make the omelette. I'm not the somebody."

Except that she did not shirk work, she gave no sign of gratitude. Darley was another Pate, another man who was, to please himself, experimenting on her with a system. She was not afraid of him now; men in her experience were usable stepping-stones and when their use to her

was gone, she stepped from one to another. In the present case she saw clearly what he was aiming at and the necessity of this training in technique. It had visible results, it wasn't, like Pate's, a journey to a peak mistily beyond a far horizon and it would, in any case, last only for the three months she was to spend in the chorus of "The Little Viennese." He could take pains with her and she would generously be there to be taken pains with; it was a sort of exercise which he preferred to playing golf with the men or the other girls of the company, and she permitted his enjoyment of the preference because it was of use to her.

"What did you want to go on the stage for, anyhow?" he asked her once.

"To hold them," she said, "there!" And made a gesture, imperious, queenly, that almost wrung applause from him. "To have them in my grip like that. To know I've got them in my power."

"I think you'll do it, Mary, when you have learned to feel," he told her soberly.

She looked at him with glittering eyes. "Gee, does it get you like that?" he said, amazed. Here, to be welcomed with both hands, was feeling at last.

"Yes," said Mary, dashing him to earth, "there's money in it."

"You miserable slut!" he said, and flung out of her room.

Money! Yet hadn't she excuse? She feared poverty, having known it. Poverty, for her, was not a question of what would happen to an income of a thousand a year if the income tax went up; it was Jackman's Buildings and the Staithley streets. If she could help it, she was not going back to poverty. To Staithley perhaps she would go back: she was indeed fixed in her idea to go back, to buy, with her stage-made wealth, a house in Staithley

like Walter Pate's and to be rich in Staithley. So far, in her journeyings, she had seen no place like Staithley: either there was flatness which depressed her, or hills which were too urbane, or too low, too much like mounds in a park to be worthy of the name of hills. The stage was a means to an end, and the end was Staithley, a house of her own, an independence—and her present salary was thirty-five shillings a week, less ten per cent to Chown! She was, at any rate, thrifty with it, seeing no need, on tour, with her contract in her pocket, to revise her wardrobe in the direction of effectiveness and keeping her nose too closely to the grindstone Darley held to have time for money-spending in other ways. She watched with satisfaction her Post Office Savings Bank account increase by a weekly ten shillings.

Darley relented and came back next day with the Maisie part in "The Girl from Honolulu" in his pocket. "Damn her," he thought, "she's honest about it and there have been avaricious artists. Avarice and Art aren't contradictory." He expected no more at their parting than the cool "Good-by" she gave him.

"Full of possibilities," he reported her to Drayton, and when Drayton asked him to be more definite, "I can't," he wrote, "be more definite than this. You know those Chinese toys consisting of a box within a box of beautiful wood, wonderfully made? You marvel at the workmanship and you open box after box. You get tired and you go on opening because each box is beautiful and because of a faint hope you have that there'll be something in the last box. I don't know what's in hers. That's her secret and her mystery, and, by the way, you can discount what Pettigrew is going to tell you of her Maisie. It isn't her Maisie. It's mine. I've rehearsed her in it."

"Darley's mad about her," Drayton interpreted this to Rossiter.

Darley was, anyhow, sufficiently interested to travel across half England to see her play Maisie on her first Saturday night, in Liverpool. He stood at the side of the circle where he could watch both her and the house, and he waited, especially for a scene which was one of the weaknesses of the piece, when Maisie, by sheer blague, has to subdue a rascally beachcomber who intends robbery. He wasn't afraid of her song, but this scene called for acting; it wasn't plausible, even for musical comedy, unless Maisie carried it off *con brio*.

And he had, that night, his reward for the labor of these months. It was Saturday night, and the audience stopped eating chocolates. Darley wasn't looking at the stage, he was looking at the audience and he knew triumph when he saw it. They stopped eating. Darley looked upon his work and knew that it was good.

"*Ich dien,*" he muttered. "By God, I do. Where's the bar?"

CHAPTER VI

THE DREAM IN STONE

If some one idiosyncratic and original, some one bold to challenge the accepted order, had dared to put Mary Arden on her defense, if it had been asked what she was doing in the war, she would have replied with cool assurance that she was keeping her head about it when nothing was more easy than intemperance. Every day her post brought letters which encouraged the belief, not that she made an opportunity of war, but that she held high rank amongst home-keeping indispensables. Her letters from unknown men in the trenches were explicit that Mary Arden was the England they were fighting for—food, if she had cared to eat it, for the grossest conceit.

She was, by now, the leading musical comedy exponent of demureness, with Chown as her undroppable pilot; and Pate, Darley and a procession of stage managers who had steered less ably than that devoted pair were forgotten rungs on the ladder she had climbed. She kept her head about things more yeasty, in her microcosm more demoralizing, than the war; she kept her head about success and kept it about men. She rode vanity on the snaffle because she was herself ridden by ambition.

Once the ambition had been trivial, once she had aimed no higher than a house in Staithley as big as Walter Pate's, but she had grown since then and, with her, ambition grew, rooted in something older than her vanity or than herself, rooted in the Bradshaw hatred of the Hep-

plestalls. Secretly she nursed her ambition to possess a great house on Staithley Edge, high, dominating the town of the Hepplestalls, a house to make the old Hall look like a cottage, a house where she would live, resuming her name of Bradshaw, eclipsing the Hepplestalls in Staithley.

In eyes accustomed to the London she had conquered, the Hepplestalls dwindled while Mary Arden, star, looked very big. There was veritable conspiracy to augment her sense of self-importance and even the newspapers, as the war degenerated into routine, gave of their restricted space to say, repeatedly, that Mary Arden was a "person." To such an one, her ambition seemed no foolishness, but it wasn't to be done just yet—nor by practicing such crude economies as those of her first cheese-paring tour. Dress mattered to her now; it belonged with her position like other sumptuosities inseparable from a position which was itself a symbol of extravagance. She rode the whirlwind of the war, a goddess of the Leave Front, dressing daintily as men would have her dress, but if there was lavishness at all it was for professional purposes only. It was lavishness corrected by prudence, lavishness calculated to maintain a position which was to lead her to a house in Staithley Edge. She was a careful spendthrift, and she was careful, too, in other ways. The dancing and the dining, the being seen with the right man at the right places—these were not so much the by-products of success as its buttresses; and to be expert in musical comedy acting implies expertness in the technique of being a gay companion. She exercised fastidious selectiveness, but, having chosen, gave her company at costly meals to young officers who returned to France swaggering in soul, mentioning aloud with infinite casualness that they had lunched with Mary Arden. It was tremendously the thing to do: one might be a lieutenant in France but one had carried a baton in London: and one didn't, even when the

sense of triumph led one to the mood of after-dinner boasting, hint that there was anything but her company at meals or at a dance to be had from Mary Arden. The Hepplestalls were going to find no chink in her immaculate armor when she queened it over them from her great house on the hill, but to suggest that mere pride was the motive of her continence is to do her an injustice.

Socially as well as theatrically, then, she had her vogue and nothing seemed to threaten it; yet Mr. Rossiter had the strange caprice to be not wholly satisfied with Mary Arden. As a captain of the light entertainment industry, he was doing exceedingly well out of the war; he had a high opinion of the Colonial soldiery; the young British officer was hardly behind the Colonial private in his eagerness to occupy Mr. Rossiter's stalls, and at times when leave was suspended the civilian population filled the breach in its very natural desire for an antidote to anxiety. Surely he was captious to be finding fault anywhere, last of all with Mary Arden? But Hubert Rossiter did not hold his position by taking short views or by seeing only the obvious, and he sent for Mr. Chown to discuss with him the shortcomings of his client, Miss Arden.

"Sit down, Lexley," he said. "Have you read that script I sent you?"

Mr. Chown produced from a neat attaché-case the typescript of Mr. Rossiter's next play, with a nod which managed to convey, besides mere affirmation, his deep admiration of the inspired managerial judgment.

"Well, now," said Rossiter briskly, "about Mary Arden. There's every musical reason why I should cast her for Teresa in this piece. She can sing the music. Leslie's the alternative and Leslie can't sing it. The question is, can Mary act it?"

Mr. Chown's geese were not swans: he knew that his

clients, even if they were his clients, had limitations. "I saw her in the other part as I read it, Hubert," he fenced.

"The flapper part isn't worth Mary's salary. Now, is it? Seriously, I'm troubled about Mary."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She keeps her heart at her banker's for one thing. Do you know she once came into this office with a 'bus ticket stuck in the cuff of her sleeve? A leading part at the Galaxy Theatre, and rides in a 'bus!"

"That wasn't recently. Be fair, Hubert. And where do you want her to keep her heart?"

"Where she wore the 'bus ticket. On her sleeve. If she's so fond of money, Lexley, why doesn't she go after it? There's plenty about."

Chown stiffened in his chair. "As Miss Arden's agent, Hubert," he said severely, "I protest against that suggestion."

Rossiter smiled blandly. "Right. You've done your duty to your client and to the proprieties. Now we'll get down to facts."

"But anyhow, Hubert, don't forget what this girl is. She plays on her demureness. It's Mary's winning card."

"A nunnery's the place for her sort of demureness. In the theater a woman only scores by demureness when it's known to the right people that she's a devil off the stage."

"No! No," cried Chown. "You—"

"The theater is a place of illusion, my friend. In any case, Mary's been doing flappers too long. She's getting old."

"You're simply being perverse, Hubert." Mr. Chown was genuinely angry. Mary Arden old!

"Then," said Rossiter, "she began young and it comes to the same thing. What's a play-going generation? Five years? Very well, for a generation of playgoers she's been doing demure flappers and it's time she did

something else and time somebody else did the flappers. And can she do anything else? Can she? I'll tell you in one word what's the matter with Mary—virginity."

Mr. Chown could only bow his head in sorrowing agreement. "She is immoderate," he said gloomily and Rossiter stared at him, finding the adjective surprising until "Everything in moderation, including virginity," quoted Chown.

"Is that your own?" asked Rossiter with relish.

But Chown disclaimed originality and even personal knowledge of his mot's authorship. He did not read books. He read life and, especially on Thursdays, the *Daily Telegraph*. "The man who said it to me said it was Samuel Butler's."

"It's good," pronounced Rossiter, writing the name down. "I'll get Drayton to write to this man Butler and see if he'll do me a libretto. I like his flavor."

"I'm afraid he's dead," said Chown.

"Oh, this war!" grieved Rossiter. "This awful war! Is it to take all our promising young men? Well, to come back to Mary. I want to cast her for Teresa and now, candidly, she being what she is, can I?"

"No," agreed Chown.

"There it is! Waste. Constriction of her possibilities. I wish you'd make her see that it's bad for her art. You and I have to watch over our young women like fathers. You brought this girl to me and I've endorsed your judgment so far: but she's got no future if she doesn't mend her ways. I've been thinking of reviving 'The Duchess of Dantzic.'"

"For her?" gasped Chown. "Mary to play Sans-Gêne?"

"She can sing it, but she can't act it—yet. If she's out for marriage, get her married. Marry her yourself. Do something. But a woman who shirks life will never

play Sans-Gêne." Rossiter rose to administer a friendly pat to Chown's shoulder. "Think it over, old man," he said earnestly. "Meantime," he conceded graciously, "I'll give Teresa to Leslie and Mary can flap once more. But, I warn you, it's the last time. I'm tired of real demureness. I want real acting."

Chown hesitated slightly, then "Do you know, I've a card up my sleeve about Mary," he said.

"Then, for God's sake, play it, my lad. Play it. It's overdue."

"What about giving her a character part?"

"Character? That's not her line. You know as well as I do that we can't monkey with the public's expectations. An actress can afford anything except versatility."

"Listen," said Chown. "I picked her up in Lancashire and her accent's amazing. I needn't remind you that Lancashire is almost as popular on the stage as Ireland. As you said, the theater's a place of illusion."

"Did you notice," asked Rossiter witheringly, "that the scene of this piece is laid in Granada?"

"Does that matter?" asked Chown blandly.

Rossiter was turning over the pages of the script. "Not a bit," he hardily admitted. "I'll take the chance, Lexley. We'll make her Lancashire, and there's a male part that'll have to go to Lancashire too. What a pity that chap Butler was killed in the war. He'd have been just the man to write it in."

"I don't think he was Lancashire," said Chown and, in his turn, "Does that matter?" asked Rossiter. "You go and have that talk with Mary and leave me to look after authors. It takes doing nowadays. Surprising what they'll ask for doing a bit of re-writing. Makes a hole in a ten-pound note if you don't watch it."

Chown had a talk, rather than "that" talk, with Mary,

omitting, for instance, Rossiter's recommendation of matrimony as essential to an actress. Experience, with or without marriage lines, might tap an emotional reservoir but, in her case, the experience would certainly go with marriage and Chown had suffered too often by the retirement of his successful clients after marriage to risk advising it. He considered Rossiter incautious. "There's a part for you in 'Granada the Gay,'" he told her, "that is going to make you a new reputation. A Lancashire part and London will think you're acting it. You and I know you *are* it, but we won't mention that."

"This is interesting," said Mary Ellen with shining eyes. "I'll work at this. I'll show them something."

Chown nodded, satisfied that she would, in fact, "show them" enough to silence Rossiter's murmurings for the next two years—nobody looked for a shorter run than that from a musical comedy in war time—and Rossiter was indeed ungrudging in his admission that Mary's demure Lancastrian, with the terrific and accurate accent coming with such rugged veracity from those pretty lips, was the success of "Granada the Gay." People were going with scant selectiveness to all theaters alike, but there were a few, and the Galaxy among them, which had their special lure.

It was a curiosity of the time, full though the theaters were, that advance bookings were low. No one could see ahead, no one's time was his own and perhaps that was the reason or perhaps it was only the sentiment which underlay the practice of going impulsively to theaters without the solemnity of premeditation involved in booking seats many days ahead; and the two young officers, sitting down to dinner, were not remarkable in expecting at that late hour to get stalls at any theater they pleased. "Libraries"—that curious misnomer of the ticket agencies—perhaps kept up their sleeves a parcel of certainly sale-

able tickets for the benefit of abrupt men in khaki, but libraries were crowded places to be avoided by those who had the officering habit of telling some one else to do the tedious little things.

"We might go on to a show after this," said Derek Carton. "Don't you think so, Fairy? Waiter, send a page with the theater list. I want tickets for something."

His companion, only arrived that day from France, let his eyes stray sensuously over the appointments of the restaurant. He was to eat in a room decorated in emulation of a palace at Versailles; the chefs were French; the guests, when they were not American, were of every allied or neutral European nationality; the band played jazz music; and to the marrow of him, as he contemplated the ornate evidences of materialistic civilization, he exulted in his England. The hardship was that he couldn't spend the whole of this leave in London: he must go, to-morrow, to Staithley. He was, he had been for six months, Sir Rupert Hepplestall, but when his father died the 1918 German push was on and leave impossible. Decidedly he must go North, this time, this once, though—oh, hang the Hepplestalls! Why couldn't they let him go quietly, to look in decent privacy at his father's grave? But no: they must make him a director of the firm and they must call a meeting for him to attend. Well-meaning but absurd old men who had not or who would not see that Rupert was free of Hepplestall's now. Sincerely he mourned his father's death, and they wouldn't let him be simple about it, they complicated a fellow's pilgrimage to Sir Philip's grave by their obtuse attempt to thrust his feet into Sir Philip's shoes.

That needn't matter to-night, though, that sour affront to the idea of leave: it was his complication not Carton's who, good man, had met him at the station. Like Rupert, Carton had gone from Cambridge to the war, then he had

lost a leg and now had a job at the War Office: and the jolly thing was that Carton hadn't altered, he was as he used to be even to calling Rupert by that old nickname. If you have seventy-three inches you are naturally called Fairy and out there nobody ever thought of calling you anything else except on frigidly official occasions. But you were never quite sure of the home point of view; the thing called war-mind made such amazing rabid asses of the people who were not fighting and you weren't certain even of Carton and now you were a little ashamed of having been uncertain. Of course, old Carton would not rot him about his title; of course, he would call him Fairy, he wouldn't allude to that baronetcy of which Rupert was still so shy.

"Stop dreaming, Fairy," said Derek, and he looked across the table to find a page-boy at Derek's elbow and a theater-list on the table before him. "What shall it be?"

"Oh, Robey, I suppose."

"Yes," Derek agreed. "Usually Robey's first choice. Just now, it's Robey or 'Granada the Gay,' with a girl called Arden."

"You're in charge," said Rupert. "I've heard of Mary Arden."

Derek tried not to look superior. "It's usual," he said. "Galaxy Theater, boy," and presently received a pink slip of paper entitling him to the occupancy of two stalls that night. Nothing would have surprised him more than not to have received it, an hour before the curtain rose on a musical comedy in the first flush of brilliant success.

They ate and mostly their talk was superficial. It preserved a superficial air when men who had been killed were spoken of and only once did there seem divergence in their points of view. Some technical point of gunnery came up and Derek, who was at the War Office, agreed

that "We can't improve it yet. But I tell you, old man, in the next war—"

"That—that was a topping Turkish Bath we went to before dinner," said Rupert.

Derek stared. "What?" he gasped.

"I'm changing the subject," said Rupert with a smile of forgiveness for his friend who had been home too long, too near to the newspapers and the War Office. At the Front, they didn't talk of the next war, they were fighting the last of the wars. But he didn't want argument with Derek to-night. "Are you through that liqueur?" he asked. "Let's go on to this theater, shall we?"

Rossiter could not and did not expect his commissionaires to emulate the silky suppleness of cosmopolitan head waiters, but it was impressed upon them that they were not policemen on point duty but the servants of a gentleman receiving their master's guests; he neglected nothing, "producing" the front of the house as he produced the entertainment on the stage or the business organization in his office. It was whispered to husbands that his most exquisite achievement was the ladies' cloak-room. You might leave your restaurant savage at the bill, but by the time you had progressed from the Galaxy entrance to your stall, you were so saluted, blarneyed, caressed, that there was no misanthropy in you.

It captivated Rupert; he couldn't, try as he would, duplicate Derek's stylish air of matter-of-fact boredom. Yesterday he was in hell and to-morrow, very likely, he would swear if the waiter at the hotel brought up tepid tea to his bedside; but to-night he hadn't made adjustments, to-night he was impressible by amenity. And he had read in the papers that London had grown unmanly! Outrageous libel on an earthly paradise.

But it may be hazarded that first steps, even in paradise, are not sure-footed, and in spite of his bodily ease,

and the "atmosphere" of Mr. Rossiter's stalls and his eagerness to be amused, his mind, accustomed to the grotesque convention, war, did not immediately accept the grotesque convention, musical comedy. In a day or two he would, no doubt, be as greedy of unreality as any believer in the fantastic untruths distributed to the Press by the War Office propaganda departments, but he was too lately come to Cloud Cuckoo Land to have sloughed his sanity yet. He had yearned for color and he had it now; and the vivid glare of a Rossiter musical comedy put an intolerable strain upon his eyes, while the humor of the comedians put his brain in chancery. Home-grown jokes, he supposed, and yet their mess had fancied itself at wit. He was regretful that he had not insisted on Robey. Robey was the skilled liaison officer between Front and Leave. Robey jerked one's thoughts irresistibly into the right groove at once; he wouldn't have sat under Robey wilting to the dismal conviction that his first evening on leave was turning to failure.

Then, from off-stage, a girl began to speak, and Rupert sat taut in his stall. He all but rose and stood to attention as Mary Arden appeared in the character of that inapposite Lancastrian in *Granada*. She did not merely salt the meat for him; there was no meat but her. He thought that, then blushed at the coarseness of a metaphor which compared this girl with meat. She spoke in the dialect of Lancashire and where he had been dull to the humor of the comedians, all was crystal now. Boredom left him; the morose sentiment of a ruined evening melted like cloud in the sunshine of Mary Arden; phoenix-like leave rose again to the level of anticipation and beyond.

Tell him that he was ravished because she reminded him of Staithley, and he would not have denied that he was ravished but he would have denied very hotly that Staith-

ley had anything to do with it. Suggest that he was seized and held because she spoke a dialect which was his as well as hers, and he would have denied knowledge of a single dialect word. But Rupert was born in Staithley where dialect, like smoke, is in the air and inescapable and Mary was calling to something so deep in him that he did not know he had it, his love of Lancashire covered up and locked beneath his school, Cambridge, the Army. She turned the key, she sent him back to the language he spoke in boyhood, not in the nursery or the schoolroom, but in emancipated hours in the garage and the stables where dialect prevailed. Obstinate in his creed of hatred of the Lancashire of the Hepplestalls, he did not know what she had done to him, but he felt for Mary the intimacy of old, tried acquaintanceship. He was unconscious of others on the stage, even as background: he was unconscious of being in a theater at all and sat gaping when the curtain cut him off from her and Derek began to push past him with an impatient "Buck up. Just time for a drink before they close. Always a scram in the bar. Come along."

"But," said Rupert still sitting, still stupidly resenting the intrusion of the curtain, "but—Mary Arden."

"If that's the trouble, I'll take you round and introduce you afterwards. Anything, so long as we don't miss this drink."

Derek led his friend to the bar, where there was opportunity for Rupert, amongst a thirsting thrusting mob, to revise his estimate of London manners in war-time. When they had secured whiskies, "You know her!" Rupert said, jealous for the first time of Derek's enforced home-service.

"I've met her once," said Derek. "That's a good enough basis for introducing you, to an actress. But I might as well warn you. Mary's as good as her reputation. A lot of men have wasted time making sure of that."

"I see," said Rupert curtly. "But you'll introduce me."

"Yes," said Derek, "if you insist." He had brought Rupert to the Galaxy because it was the thing to do, just as he had met Mary for the same reason, but he resented her strangeness. To Derek an actress who was not only notoriously but actually "straight" was simply not playing the game and he was reluctant to add Rupert to the train of her exhibited and deluded admirers. Whereas Rupert would have shrunk aghast at the temerity of his thoughts if he had realized Mary as an actress and a famous one. He was, in all modesty, seeing her possessively because she and he were alone in a crowd.

He had to mar with Lancashire this leave which had suddenly turned so glamorous; there was the more reason, then, for boldness, for grasping firmly the opportunity presented by Carton's introduction, but it troubled him to shyness to think that he had so greatly the advantage of her. He had watched her for three hours and she hadn't seen him yet. It seemed to him unfair.

His first impression, as her dressing-room door opened to Derek and he looked over his friend's shoulder, was of cool white walls and chintz hangings. The gilt Empire chairs, relics of a forgotten Rossiter production, which furnished the cell-like room as if it were a great lady's prison de luxe in bygone France, added in some indefinable way to its femininity. The hangings bulged disconcertingly over clothing.

In his stall he had established that he knew her, but this seemed too abrupt a plunge into her intimacy. She sat, with her back to him, at a table littered with mysteries, and her hair hung loosely down her white silk dressing-gown. He turned away, with burning face, only to find in that room of mirrors no place to which to turn. Car-

ton, that lump of ice, was unaffected, and so was Mary herself who continued, messily, to remove grease-paint from her face with vaseline and a vigorous towel while she gave Carton, sideways, an oily hand. She was not incommoding herself for a man she hardly remembered.

"Weren't there two of you when you came in?" she asked and Derek realized that Rupert had fled. "Fairy!" he called, and opened the door. "Come in, man."

Mary laughed. "Fairy?" she said. "You've a quaint name. Fairy by name and nature. Fairies disappear."

He was distressingly embarrassed. Carton had, merely instinctively, called him by the usual nickname, and was he, to escape her gay quizzing, to draw himself up grandly and to say that he wasn't Fairy but Sir Rupert? "Fairy" set her first impressions against him, but to attempt their correction by announcing that he had a title might, by its pompousness, only turn bad to worse. Better, for the moment, let it slide. He smiled gallantly. "When I disappear again," he said, "it will be because you tell me to." He cursed his unreadiness to rise above the level of idiocy.

"Do you know, Miss Arden, Fairy comes from Lancashire," said Derek, by way of magnanimously helping a lame dog over a stile.

"Does he?" said Mary listlessly. She could see in her glass without turning round his large supple frame and his handsome face which would, she thought, look better without the conventional mustache. She placed men quickly now. Well-bred, this boy, gentle. Too gentle? Probably not. Big men were apt to be gentle through very consciousness of strength, and he was graceful for all his size. "Fairy" would do: decidedly he would do to replace as her decorative companion across restaurant tables her latest cavalier who had just gone back to France.

"Oh," he was saying, "it won't interest Miss Arden that I come from Lancashire."

"Well," she said, hinting a gulf impassable between North and South, "I'm a London actress."

"That's the miracle of it," he said. "Lancashire's an old slag-heap of a county and one couldn't be proud of it. Only, by Jove, I am, since hearing you. It's queer, but when you spoke Lancashire it was as if I met an old friend I hadn't seen for a long time. I know it's awful cheek, Miss Arden, but it seemed to put me on an equality with you."

She did not know he was a Hepplestall, she missed the poignant irony of their identities, but when Sir Rupert haltingly told her that it was "awful cheek" in him to feel on an equality with the exalted Mary Ellen Bradshaw, she had, unusually, the thought that she ought to check this absurd diffidence by blurting out that she learned her Lancashire on Staithley Streets, that she was not acting but was the real, raw thing. It was not often, these days, that Mary blushed to accept homage. She hadn't put herself, the times, the strange perverted times, had put her on a pinnacle and, being there, she did what men seemed gratified that she should do, she looked down on them. But because she kept her head, she had not resented, she had welcomed, the one or two occasions when she had been made to feel ashamed. There was a man, now dead, whom she recalled because Rupert was making her in the same way look at herself through a diminishing-glass. He had, unlike the most, talked to her of the things they were doing over there: he had told her in a matter-of-fact way of their daily life and she had made comparisons with hers, she had dwindled to her true dimensions. And Rupert by means she couldn't analyze was giving a similar, salutary experience. She felt shrunken before him and was happy to shrink.

Derek's formula for the correct welcome of a fighting soldier on leave included supper at a night club, and they were wasting time on the impossible woman. "I expect you want to turn us out so that you can dress," he cut in.

"Oh!" cried Rupert, alarmed at the idea of going so pat upon their coming. "But—yes, I suppose you must. Only I—" he took courage, if it wasn't desperation, in both hands and added, "Will you lunch with me to-morrow at the Carlton?"

She pretended to consult a full engagement-book. "I might just manage it," she grudged defensively. Though he shrank her and she realized being shrunk by him, he was not to think that lunch with Mary Arden was less than a high privilege.

He took that view himself. "I shall be greatly honored," he said sincerely: then Derek hustled him away, but not to the night club. Rupert resisted that anti-climax, he who had held Mary's hand in his. "But I'm so grateful to you, Derek," he emphasized.

"Are you? Then don't be ungrateful if I tell you that no one's quite sane on leave," and sane or not, Rupert went to bed in the elated mood of a man who knows he has created something. "Like a hen clucking over an egg," was Derek's private comment on his friend.

CHAPTER VII

MARY AND RUPERT

RUPERT lay in bed morosely contemplating the first fact about Leave—its brutal elasticity. If he did not know, on the one hand, what he had done to deserve the acquaintanceship of Mary Arden, he did not know, on the other, that he deserved that dark intrusion on brief London days, the Staithley visit. Fortune first smiled, then apishly grimaced, but he threw off peevishness with the bed-clothes and the tang of cold water. Soberly, if intrusion was in question, then it was Mary who intruded and if he hadn't learned, by now, to take things as they came, he had wasted his time in France.

He must go to Staithley, he must attend the conclave of the Hepplestalls, but he need not then and there make his protest articulate. Would it, indeed, be decent, coming as he would straight from his first reverent visit to his father's grave, to fling defiance at his uncles? If they cared to read consent into an attitude studiously non-committal, why, they must; but he wouldn't in so many words announce his irrevocable decision never to be bondsman to Hepplestall's; he wouldn't by any sign of his invite a tedium of disputation which might keep him, heaven knew how long, from London and his Mary.

His Mary! That was thought which outran discretion, truth and even hope. The most he sanguinely expected of her was that she would consent, for the period of his leave, to "play" with him and, of course, there was a matter,

trivial but annoying, to be set right first. That introduction under his nickname bothered him: his silence suggested that he was ashamed to acknowledge himself at the moment of being presented to an actress, and the suggestion was insulting to her. So far, and so far as the invitation to lunch went, she had accepted him as her companion "on his face," and it might have been romantic enterprise to see if she would continue to consort with a Fairy, a man cursed with a name as grotesque as Cyrano's nose, but he took Mary too seriously to put their playtime in jeopardy by keeping up a masquerade. The last thing he would do was to traffic on his title, but the first was to let her know that he wasn't a Fairy! By telling a waiter to address him as Sir Rupert? He didn't like that way. The way of an intriguer. No, he must face his dilemma, hoping to find means to bring out the truth without (God forbid!) advertising it, and in the first moments of their meeting, too.

What prevented him from telling her when she came into the restaurant and held out her hand with an "Ah, Captain Fairy," was her disconcerting frock. It was not an unusual frock except that it was a fashionable and supreme frock and Mary had torn off two other fashionable frocks before she decided that this was an occasion for a supreme frock. It was an occasion, she admitted by stages marked by the change of frock, for her best defenses. She had welcomed medicinally the purge to pride he had unconsciously administered but he must not make a habit of it and from head to foot, within and without, she wrapped herself in dress-assurance.

"You're stunning," he said at sight of her, stupidly and truthfully, missing the finer excellences of her frock, disconcerted by it simply because it was a frock. Idiot, he called himself, did he expect her to come to the Carlton in a white silk dressing-gown with her hair down her

shoulders? But neither on the stage nor in her dressing-room had he seen her with her hair up and he hadn't, in that particular, been imaginative about her. He saw her now a well-dressed woman, superbly a woman, but so different from the Mary of stage-costume or of dishabille, so wonderfully more mysterious, that his illusion of knowing her very soul dropped from him and left him bankrupt of confidence in the presence of a lady charming but unknown.

They were at a table and Mary had the conversation under control long before he realized that she was still addressing him as Captain Fairy. Perhaps, after all, his assertion of himself would go best with the coffee: he resolved very firmly that he wouldn't let it slide beyond the coffee. He became aware of subtle oppositions between them, of pleasant undercurrents in action and reaction making an electricity of their own; he sensed her evident desire to lead the conversation. Well, she would naturally play first fiddle to a Fairy, but perhaps there was something else and, if so, he could put that right without embarrassing himself. She had said last night, as if pointedly, "I'm a London actress," thinking of him, no doubt, as a provincial.

He said, "By the way, Carton mentioned last night that I come from Lancashire. His point was, I suppose, that it would interest you because you happen to be playing a Lancashire part. I'm Lancashire by the accident of birth, but I hope I've outlived it in my life."

"Oh!" said Mary, thinking of a photograph of Staithley Edge which hung on the wall of her flat almost with the significance of the ikon in a Russian peasant's room, "oh, are you ashamed of Lancashire?"

"I'm going there this afternoon, as a matter of fact, probably for the last time. I don't think the word is 'ashamed,' though. I've outgrown Lancashire. I shall

settle in London after the war. Look here, may I tell you about it? Theoretically, I was supposed to go back to Lancashire some day, after I'd finished at Cambridge. To go back on terms I loathed, and I didn't mean to go back. I was reading pretty hard at Cambridge, not for fun, but to get a degree—a decent degree; to have something to wave in their faces as a fairly solid reason for not going back. I thought of going to the bar, just by way of being something reasonable, but I don't know that it matters now. I mean after the war they can't possibly expect the things of a man that they thought it was possible, and I didn't, to expect before. My father's dead, too, since then. And that makes a lot of difference. I'm awfully sorry he died, but I can't help seeing that his death liberates me. I shan't go back to Lancashire at any price."

He had the earnest fluency of a man talking about himself to a woman. How well she knew it! And how old, how wise, how much more experienced than the oldest war-scarred veteran of them all did she not feel when her young men poured out their simple histories to her! But she was used to the form of consultation. They put it to her, as a rule, that they sought her advice and though she knew quite well that their object was to flatter, it piqued her now that Rupert did not ask advice. He reasoned, perhaps, and his assertion was not of what he would do after the war but of what he positively would not. He was not going back to Lancashire and, "You do pay compliments," she said a little tartly. "You bring out to lunch an actress who's doing a Lancashire part and you tell her that Lancashire's not good enough for you."

"But that's your art," he cried, "to be so wonderfully not yourself. Seriously, Miss Arden, for you, a London actress, to be absolutely a Lancashire girl on the stage is

sheer miracle. But that's not the question and between us two, is Lancashire a place fit to live in?" So he bracketed them together, people of the great world.

"I won't commit myself," she said. It was not her art, it was herself, but she couldn't answer back his candor with candor of her own and felt again at disadvantage with him. He attacked and she could not defend. She said, "Oh, I expect you'll get what you want. You look the sort that does." She was almost vicious about it.

"I hope I shall," he said, gazing ingenuous admiration at her. "For instance—"

She moved sharply as if she dodged a blow. Men did queer things on leave; she had had proposals from them though she knew them as little as she knew Rupert. "For instance," he went on imperviously, "shall I get this? Shall I get your promise to have lunch with me here on Thursday? I shall be back from Lancashire by then."

"Yes, I'll lunch," she said convulsively, calling herself a fool to have misjudged him and a soppy fool, like the soppiest fool of a girl at the theater, to be so apt to think of marriage. Yet Mary thought much of marriage, not as the "soppy fools" thought, hopefully, but defensively. Marriage did not march with her dream in stone and the thought of Mary Ellen Bradshaw on Staithley Edge. She fought always for that idea, and refusals were the trophies she had won in her campaigns for it, usually easy victories, but once or twice she had not found it easy to refuse. Did Rupert jeopardize the dream? She couldn't say and, thank God, she needn't say. He hadn't asked her, but she admitted apprehension, she confessed that he belonged with those very few who had made her dream appear a bleak and empty thing. This man disturbed her: she was right to be on her guard, to bristle in defense of her dream at the least sign of passion in him. But she

despised herself for bristling unnecessarily, for imagining a sign which wasn't there. He had, confoundedly, the habit of making her despise herself.

Then it happened, not what she had feared would happen but something even more disturbing.

"Ah," he said gayly, "then that's a bet. That's something to look forward to while I'm at Staithley."

Staithley! Staithley! It rang in her brain. Stammering she spoke it. "Staithley!"

"Yes," he said. "It's a Lancashire town. I don't suppose you've ever heard of it, but my people, well, we're rather big pots up there."

"In Staithley?" she repeated.

"Yes. We're called Hepplestall." He looked at her guiltily. Mary's teeth were clenched and her bloodless hands gripped the table hard, but actress twice over, woman and Mary Arden, and modern with cosmetics, her face showed nothing of her inward storm. "That idiotic name Carton called me by—they all do it," he protested loyally. "It's odds on that they've forgotten what my real name is but I'm Rupert Hepplestall really and . . . oh, as a matter of form, I'm Sir Rupert Hepplestall. I—I can't help it, you know."

One didn't make a scene in a restaurant. One didn't scream in a restaurant. One didn't go into hysterics in a restaurant. That was all she consciously thought, clutching the table till it seemed the veins in her fingers must burst. Hepplestall—and she. And Mary Ellen Bradshaw. Lunching together. Oh, it—but she was thinking and she must not think. She must repeat, over and over again, "One does not make a scene, one—"

Immensely surprised she heard herself say, "No, you can't help it," and as she saw him smile—the smile of a schoolboy who is "let off" a peccadillo—she concluded that she must have smiled at him.

"I'm better now I've got that off my chest," he said. "I had to do it before we parted though, by George, I've cut it fine." There are several ways, besides the right way, of looking at a wrist-watch. She was annoyed to find herself capable of noticing that Rupert's was the right way. "I shall have to dash for my train. Where can I put you down? I must go now: I'll apologize on Thursday for abruptness."

"I'm going to the flat," she said. "Baker Street." He was paying the bill, getting his cap and stick, urging pace on the taxi-driver, busy in too many ways to be observant of Mary.

"Hepplestall," she thought going up her stairs, "Heppestall, and I've to act to-night." Her bed received her.

Incongruous in youth and khaki he sat abashed amongst black-coated elders of the service at the board of Hepplestall's. He wanted urgently to scoff, to feel that it all didn't matter because nothing mattered but the war, and they set the war in a perspective new to him, as passing episode reacting certainly upon the permanency, Hepplestall's, but reacting temporarily as the Cotton Famine had reacted in the days of the American Civil War.

He did not fail to perceive the significance of old Horace, Sir Philip's uncle, who was seventy, with fifty years to his credit of leadership in the Service, a living link with heaven knew what remote ancestors. Perhaps old Horace in his youth had seen the Founder himself. It bridged time, it was like shaking hands with a man who had been patted on the head by Wellington, and, like Horace, Rupert was subjected to the fact of being Heppestall. The law of his people, the dour and stable law, ran unchangeable by time.

Complacent he had not been as he bared his head before Sir Philip's grave, but he had kept his balance.

Death, that lay outside youth's normal thought and entered it with monstrousness, was Rupert's known familiar and a father dead could sadden, but could not startle, a soldier who had seen comrades killed at his side. It touched him, quite unselfishly, to think that Sir Philip had gone knowing him not as rebel, not as apostate of the Hepplestalls, but as a son of whom he could be proud —Rupert the cricketer, the solid schoolboy who developed, unexpectedly but satisfactorily, into a reading man at Cambridge, and then the soldier; but he was stirred to other and far deeper feelings by the references made at the board to Sir Philip. They were not formal tributes, they were chatty reminiscences hitting Rupert the shrewder because there was nothing conventional about them, bringing home to the son how his father had seemed to other eyes than his. How little he had known Sir Philip! How carelessly he'd failed in his appreciations! And it was double-edged, because the very object of this meeting was to salute him as heir to the chieftainship, implying that in the son they saw a successor worthy of the father.

They even apologized to him for having, in his absence, appointed an interim successor. Sir Philip's death created a situation unprecedented in the history of the firm because never before had the Head died with his son unready to take the reins, and the war aggravated the situation. Rupert's training could not begin till the war ended; it would be many years before he took his place at the head of the table, Chairman of the Board.

Behind the training they underwent was the theory of the machine with interchangeable parts; it was assumed that the general technical knowledge they all acquired fitted each for any post to which the Service might appoint him. They did not overrate mere technique but they relied upon the quality of the Hepplestalls. If oc-

casion called a Hepplestall, he rose to it. This occasion, the occasion of a regency, had called William Hepplestall, Sir Philip's brother next in age to him.

William had not sought, but neither did he shirk, the burden of responsibility. "I will do my duty," he had said. "You know me. I am not an imaginative man, and the times are difficult. But I will do my duty."

It would, certainly, not have occurred to William in the first days of the war to convert their Dye-House from cotton dyeing to woolen: that sort of march into foreign territory, so extraordinarily lucrative, would have occurred to none but to Sir Philip, and they understood very well that under William, or under any of them now, the control would be prudent and uninspired. They looked to Rupert as inheritor of the Hepplestall tradition of inspiration in leadership. Calmly they made the vast assumption not only that he was coming to them but that he was coming to be, eventually, a leader to them as brilliant as Sir Philip had been.

"I shall not see it," said old Horace, "but I do not need to see. We continue, we Hepplestalls; we serve."

Amiably, implacably, with embarrassing deference to Sir Philip's son, they pinned him to his doom, and in France, when he had heard of this meeting they arranged for him, he had thought of it as a comic interlude, and of himself as one who would relax from great affairs to watch these little men at play! He sat weighed down, in misery. In London he had decided that he wouldn't argue, but he hadn't known that he could not argue. He was oppressed to taciturnity, to speechless sulking which they took, since Rupert did everything, even sulking, pleasantly, to mean that he was overwhelmed by the renewal, through their eulogies, of his personal grief for the loss of his father. They spoke tactfully of the war, deferring to him as a soldier; they aimed with family news

in gossipy vein of this and that Hepplestall in and out of the war, to put him at his ease, and soon the meeting ended. They took it as natural that he wished to spend his leave in London. It seemed they understood. They advised about trains.

Rupert escaped, miserable because he was not elated to leave that torture-chamber. He hadn't faced the music. But he couldn't. Altogether apart from his wish to get out of Staithley at the first possible moment, he couldn't face that music. Their expectations of him were so massive, so serene, so sure, their line unbreakable.

In the train, he recurred to that thought of the Hepplestall line. No: he could not break it, but there might be a way round. He was going to London, where Mary was, and the point, surely the point about the training of a Hepplestall was that they caught their Hepplestalls young. They cozened them with the idea of service and sent them, willing victims, to labor with their hands in Staithley Mills—because they caught them young. Rupert was twenty-five. Cynically he "placed" that meeting now: it was a super-cozening addressed to a Hepplestall who was no longer a boy: it admitted his age and the intolerable indignities the training held for a man of his age, for a captain who had a real chance of becoming a major very soon. It was their effort, their demonstration, and he saw his way to make an effort and a counter demonstration. Clearly, they saw that it wasn't reasonable to train a man of his years to spinning and the rest of it; then they would see the absolute impossibility of compelling a married man to undergo that training. A man couldn't leave his wife at some Godless early morning hour to go to work with his hands, he couldn't come home, work-stained, after a day's consorting with the operatives, to the lady who was Lady Hepplestall.

He realized, awed by his presumptuousness, that he was

thinking of Mary Arden as the lady who was Lady Hepplestall.

He thought of her with awe because he was not seeing Mary Arden, musical comedy actress, through the elderly eyes of his uncles, still less of his aunts, but from the angle of our soldiers in France who made Mary a romantic symbol of the girls they left behind them. To marry Mary Arden would be an awfully big adventure.

She had time, while he was at Staithley, to come to terms with his disclosure. In the restaurant, when it came upon her suddenly, it had sent her, certainly, heels over head, but, soberly considered, she began to ask herself what there was in it that should disconcert her. She was Bradshaw and he a Hepplestall and she believed that without effort, merely by not discouraging him, she could make him marry her. What could be neater? What revenge more exquisite upon the Hepplestalls than Mary Ellen Bradshaw, Lady Hepplestall?

True—if she hated them. But her hatred, reexamined, seemed a visionary thing; at the most it was romantic decoration to a fact and in this mood of inquisition Mary sought facts without their trimmings. She sought her hatred of the Hepplestalls and found she had no hatred in her.

She raised her eyes to the photograph of Staithley Edge. Yes, that was authentic feeling, that passion for the Staithley hills, but she didn't want to go there in order to take the shine out of the Hepplestalls. She had romanticized that feeling, she had made hatred the excuse for her ambition, so arbitrary in an actress with a vogue, to go back to live bleakly amongst smoke-tarnished moors. Rupert, for instance, was firmly set against return.

It was deflating, like losing a diamond ring, and she did not humble herself to the belief that the diamond had

never been there. It had, in the clan-hatred of the Bradshaws, but she had been stagey about it. She had magnified a childish memory into a living vendetta and, scrutinized to-day, she saw it as a tinsel wrapping, crumbling at exposure to daylight, round her sane sweet passion for the hills: and the conclusion was that Rupert Hepple stall meant no more to her than Rupert Fairy—or little more. She had mischief enough in her to savor the thought of Mary Ellen squired in London by Sir Rupert Hepple stall and decided that if he wanted to take his orders from her for the period of his leave, she would take particular pleasure in ordering him imperiously.

She calculated, she thought, with comprehensiveness, but missed two factors, one (which she should have remembered) that Rupert had seemed lovable, the other (which she could not guess) that he returned from Staithley to begin his serious wooing. He laid siege before defenses which she had deliberately weakened by her re-orientation of her facts.

One day, before he must go back to France, he spoke outright of love. If he hadn't, half a dozen times, declared himself, then he didn't know what mute announcement was, but leave was running out and addressing silent questions to a sphinx left him a long way short of tangible result.

"Oh, love!" she jeered. "What's love?"

"I can tell you that," he said, "better than I could ten days ago. Love's selfishness à deux. I'm one of the two and my idea of love is finding comfort in your arms."

She thought it a good answer, so good that it brought her to her feet and to (they were in her flat) the drawer in her desk where she had hidden a photograph. Holding it to him, "Do you recognize that?" she asked. "The other day, when we were talking, I said I had no people and—"

"Was that mattering before the war? I'm sure it doesn't matter now," he said.

"And this photograph?"

He shook his head. "It might be any hill."

"But it is Staithley Edge."

For a moment he was radiant. "You got it," he glowed, "because of me."

"I got it because of me. Listen. I'm Mary Arden, actress. I'm twenty-five years old and I'm about as high as any one can get in musical comedy. I began in the chorus, but I've had a soft passage up because I was pushed by an agent who believed in me. If you think I'm more than that, you're wrong. And I'm much less than that. I said I had no people, and it isn't true."

"I don't want to know about your people. We're you and I. We're Mary and Rupert."

"Yes. But we're Mary Bradshaw and Rupert Hepple-stall." With that, she thought, she slaughtered hope, not his alone but something that grew in her, something she was thinking of as hope because she dared not think of it as love. Now she need no longer think of it at all; she had killed it; she had met his candor with her candor, she had announced herself a Bradshaw. It was the death of hope.

Suffering herself but compassionate for the pain she must have given him, she raised her eyes to his. And the response to a lady martyring herself to truth was an indulgent smile and maddening misapprehension. "Is there anything in that? Bradshaw instead of Arden? Surely it's usual to have a stage-name."

"You haven't understood. When I pretend to be Lancashire on the stage, I don't pretend. Is that clear?"

It irked him that he couldn't say, "As mud." She was too passionately in earnest for him to dare the flippancies. He said, "Yes, that's clear."

"And Staithley in particular. I'm Staithley born and bred. Bred, I'm telling you, in Staithley Streets. My name's Bradshaw."

He lashed his memory, aware dimly that Bradshaw had associations for him other than the railway-guide. It was coming to him now. The Staithley Bradshaws, that sixteenth birthday interview with his father, his own disparaging of Tom Bradshaw and Sir Philip's defense of him. His father had been right, too. Tom was in some office under the Coalition, pulling his weight like all the rest. The war had proved his sportsmanship, as it had everybody's. He hadn't a doubt that any of the Staithley Bradshaws who were in the army were splendid soldiers.

In the ranks, though.

One thought twice about marrying their sister. He wished she hadn't told him, and as he wished it she was emphasizing, "I'm from the Begging Bradshaws."

He forced a smile. "You're a long way from them, then," he said, and she agreed on that.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I'm eight years from them. I don't know them and they don't know me. I'm Mary Arden to every one but you: only when you say your idea of love is finding comfort in my arms, I had to tell you just whose arms they are. I'm Bradshaw and I've sung for pennies in the Staithley Streets."

Some of the implications he did not perceive at once, but he saw the one that mattered. His sphinx had spoken now. She "had" to tell him, and there were only two reasons why. The first was that she loved him, and the second was that she was honest in her love—"Mary," he said, "you'll marry me."

"No."

"If you want arguments about a thing that's settled, I'll give you them," he said. "You don't know what a

gift you've brought me. You don't know how magnificently it suits me that you're Bradshaw."

"Suits you!" she cried incredulously, and he told her why of all the things she might have been she was the one which definitely wiped out all possibility of his return to Staithley. They couldn't force him there with a Bradshaw for his wife, they would be the first to cry out that it wouldn't do: she was his master-card, Mary, whom he loved; she was Mary Arden and tremendously a catch; she was Mary Bradshaw, his sure defense against the rigid expectations of the Hepplestalls and . . . oh, uncounted things besides. "And I apologize," he said, "I apologize for arguing, for dragging in the surrounding circumstance. But you tell me you're Bradshaw as if it unmade us and I tell you it's the best touch in the making of us."

She wasn't sure of that. She was idiosyncratic and peculiar herself in wishing to go back to Staithley, but she felt that her dream, though she had stripped it of romantic hate, yet stood for something sounder than his mere obstinate refusal to return. He left himself in air; he was a negative; rejecting Staithley, he had no plans of what he was to do after the war.

But that was to prejudge him, it was certainly to calculate, and she had calculated too much in her life. Caution be hanged! There was a place for wildness.

They would say, of course, that she was marrying for position. Let them say: she would, certainly, be Lady Hepplestall, but at what a discount! To be Lady Hepplestall and not to live in Lancashire, in the one place where the significance of being Hepplestall was grasped in full! It was like marrying a king in exile, it was like receiving a rope of pearls upon condition that she never wore them. It excluded the pungent climax of Mary Ellen as Mistress of Staithley Hall.

Her dream had set, indeed, in a painted sky, but she

would not linger in gaze upon its afterglow; she was not looking at sunset but at dawn, and raised her eyes to his. She discovered that she was being kissed. She had the sensation, ecstatic and poignant, surrendering and triumphant, of being kissed by the man she loved.

She had not, hitherto, conceived a high opinion of kissing. On the stage and off, it was a professional convention, fractionally more expressive than a handshake. This was radically different; this was, tinglingly, vividly, to feel, to be aware of herself and, through their lips, of him. She had the exaltation of the giver who gives without reserve, and from up there, bemused in happiness, star-high with Rupert's kiss and her renunciations, she fell through space when he unclasped her and said with brisk assurance, "Engagement ring before lunch. License after lunch. That's a reasonable program, isn't it?"

Perhaps it was reasonable to a time-pressed man whose leave could now be counted by the hour. Perhaps she hadn't seen that there is only one first kiss. It came, and no matter what the sequel held, went lonely, unmatched, unique. What passion-laden words could she expect from him to lengthen a moment that was gone?

It wasn't he who was failing her, it was herself who must, pat upon their incomparable moment, be criticizing him because he was not miraculous but practical. And this was thought, a sickly thing, when her business was to feel, it was opposition when her business was surrender. The wild thing was the right thing now. She purged herself of thought.

"Yes," she said. She was to marry. Marry. And then he would go back to France; but first he was to find comfort in her arms.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REGENCY

THE rigorous theory that a Hepplestall was instantly prepared at the word of command to go to the ends of the earth in the interests of the firm was, in practice, softened by expediency. They did not, for instance, recall their manager at Calcutta or Rio and expect him to fill a home berth as aptly as a man who had not spent half a lifetime in familiarizing himself with special foreign conditions; they used their man-power with discretion and humanity, and there seemed nothing harsh in expecting William Hepplestall, chief of their Manchester offices, to remove to Staithley when he became the acting Head.

William was a man who, in other circumstances, would have deserved the epithet "worthy," perhaps with its slightly mocking significance emphasized by a capital W. A "Worthy" has solid character bounded by parochial imagination; and William rose, but only by relentless effort, to thinking in the wide-world terms of trade imposed upon the chief of Hepplestall's Manchester warehouse. He was masterly in routine; under Sir Philip, a trusted executant of that leader's conceptions; and since he bore his person with great dignity, he cut a figure ambassadorial, impressive, fit representative in Manchester of the Hepplestalls who took the view of that city that it was an outpost—their principal outpost—of Staithley Bridge.

Probably Sir Philip, had he been alive, would have pre-

vented William's promotion; but Sir Philip had died suddenly, without chance to nominate a successor who, most likely, would have been unobvious and, most certainly, the best. And even Sir Philip would have saluted ungrudgingly the spirit, humble yet resolute, in which William accepted his responsibility. The Board, weakened in personnel by the war, did, as Boards do, the obvious thing, and were very well satisfied with the wisdom of their choice.

What they did not understand, what William himself did not foresee, was that his difficulties were to be increased by the conduct of his wife. Mrs. William had failed to realize that in marrying William she married a Service. She thought she married the head of Hepplestell's Manchester offices and that she had, as a result, her position in Manchester and her distinguished home in Alderley Edge, which is almost a rural suburb and, also, the seat of a peer. Short of living in London, to which she had vague aspirations when William retired, she was very well content with her degree; and the news that she was expected to uproot herself and to live in Staithley came as a startling assault on settled prepossessions. While she hadn't the challenging habit of asserting that she was of Manchester and proud of it, she knew the difference between Manchester, where one could pretend one was not provincial, and Staithley, where no such pretense was possible, and it was vainly that William told her of Lady Hepplestell's offer to leave the Hall in their favor. Sir Philip's widow knew, if Mrs. William didn't, what was incumbent on a Hepplestell.

"In other words, we're to be caretakers for Rupert," she said. "What will become of my Red Cross committee work here?"

William suggested that by using the car she need be cut off from none of her activities. "But I'm to live down

there," she said, "decentralized, in darkest Lancashire," and she had her alternative. If the firm required this irrational sacrifice of William's wife, he had surely his reply that he was rich enough to retire and would retire with her, to London. Her friend, Lady Duxbury, was already preparing to move to London after the war; the William Hepplestalls could move now. They were forced to move now.

"It is not a question of being rich enough to retire," he said. "No doubt I am that; but I am an able-bodied servant of the firm. We Hepplestalls do not retire while we are capable of service."

She had never thought him so dull a dog before; she whistled at the obligations of the Service, and she exaggerated the influence of a wife which persuades in proportion as it is ventured sparingly, seasonably, and with due regard to the example of pig-drivers who, when they would have their charges go to the left, make a feint of driving them to the right.

"Sir Ralph Duxbury is younger than you," she argued, "and he's retiring at the end of the war. They're going to London to enjoy life before they're too old."

"Duxbury," said William severely, "is a war-profiteer. His future plans tally with his present."

"Oh, how can you say that of your friend?"

"I can say it of most of my friends. But you would hardly suggest that it is true of me. You would hardly put the case of a Hepplestall on all fours with the case of a Duxbury."

She did suggest it. "But surely you are all in business to make money!"

"My dear," he said, with dignified rebuke, "I am a Hepplestall," and left it, without more argument, at that. He knew no cure for eyes which saw no difference between the Service and the nimble men who had thriven by the

mushroom trades of temporary war-contractors. "And we go to Staithley."

If it was a matter of capitulations, he had his own to make in his disappearance from Manchester, his familiar scene. The Head of Hepplestalls made no half-and-half business of it, dividing his days between the mills, the Manchester office and the Manchester Exchange. He left others to cut a figure on 'Change and to hold court in the offices. His place was at the source, at the mills, a standard-bearer of the cotton trade, a manufacturer first and a salesman and distributor only by proxy. It meant, for William, the change in the habits of half a lifetime, the end of his pleasant Cheshire County associations at Alderley, the end of his lunches in his club in Manchester, and, so far, he could have sympathized with Gertrude if only she hadn't, by the violence of her expression, driven him hotly to resent her view.

She called it "darkest Lancashire"—Staithley, the Staithley of the Hepplestalls! "Caretakers for Rupert!" There was truth in that, though the caretaking, by reason of the war and because when the war ended Rupert had still to begin at the beginning, would last ten years and (confound Gertrude), couldn't she see what it meant to William that he was going to live and to have his children live in Staithley Hall where he had spent his boyhood? Caretakers! They were all caretakers, they were all trustees. Above all, he, William, was Head of Hepplestall's and his wife had so little appreciation of the glory that was his as to be captious about the trivial offsets.

The responsibility, heaven knew, was heavy enough without Gertrude's adding to it this galling burden of her discontent, but, though she submitted, it was never gracefully. She went to Staithley determined that their time there should be short, that she would lose no opportunity

to press for his retirement; but she had learned the need of subtlety. She had found her William a malleable husband, but there were hard places in the softest men and here was one of them not to be negotiated easily or hurriedly, but by a gentle tactfulness. Perhaps she knew, better than he knew himself, that there was no granite in him.

She reminded him, not every day or every week, but sufficiently often to show that she did not relent, of her hatred of Staithley. She had the wisdom not to criticize the Hall—indeed she couldn't, even when she flogged resentment, disrelish that aging place of mellow beauty—but, "If it were anywhere but at Staithley!" she cried with wearying monotony, and in a score of ways she made dissatisfaction rankle. It was a fact in their lives which she intended to turn into a factor.

She made a minor counter of Rupert's marriage to a musical comedy actress. "I'm caretaker for a slut," she said, and when, after the war, William was indulgent about Rupert who was demobilized and yet did not come to Staithley, her fury was uncontrolled. "He has had no honeymoon and no holiday," said William. "Both are due to him before he comes here."

"Here," she said, "to the Hall, to turn me out of the only thing that made Staithley tolerable. You expect me to live in a villa in Staithley?"

"The Hall is Rupert's. If he were a bachelor, he would no doubt ask us to stay on. As he is married, we must find other quarters."

"But not in Staithley. William, say it shall not be in Staithley."

"It must."

"I'm evicted for that slut! Have you no more thought for your wife than to humiliate me like that?"

"There is no humiliation, Gertrude. And, I expect, no need to think of this at all yet. Rupert deserves a long holiday."

"Keeping me on tenterhooks, never knowing from one day to the next when I shall get orders to quit. And, all the time we could do the reasonable thing. We could leave Staithley and go to London."

"We shall not leave Staithley," he said. "Staithley is the home of the Head of Hepplestell's."

"The homeless Head," she taunted, and he did, in fact, almost as much as she, resent the implications of Rupert's marriage. It had been suave living at the Hall, peopled with memories of his race and, important point, affording room for a man to escape into from his wife. Certainly he had been dull about Rupert's marriage, he hadn't sufficiently perceived that he must leave the Hall to live elsewhere in Staithley. "A villa in Staithley," Gertrude put it, and truly he supposed that he must live in a house which would be correctly described as a villa. He couldn't expect the associations of the Hall, but he wanted scope in a Staithley home in which to flee from Gertrude, and looked ahead with a sense of weariness to the long period of Rupert's novitiate. Then, and not till then, he might chant his "*Nunc dimittis*," he might retire and go, as Gertrude wished, to London, but not before then. Certainly not before then.

But war disintegrates. William was wrong in thinking that he had to pit his tenacity and his sense of duty only against Gertrude. The end of the war and its immediate sequel were to blow a shrewd side-wind upon his resolution to endure.

The great delusion of the war was that its end would be peace. William was encouraged by that delusion to wrestle with the war-problems of his business: the shortage of raw cotton, the leaping costs of production, the

shortage of shipping. The home trade was good beyond precedent, it almost seemed that the higher the price the greater the demand; but the home market, at its most voracious, took only a minor part of Hepplestall's output. Turkey was an enemy; India, China and South America followed warily the upward trend of prices, expecting the end of the war to bring a sudden fall, and, also, were difficult of access by reason of the transport shortage. In spite of the military service act, in spite of their woolen dyeing, and of every device that William and the Board could contrive to keep the great mills active, there was unemployment at Hepplestall's. Cotton was rationed in Lancashire and Hepplestall's quota of the common stock was insufficient to keep their spindles at work. The situation was met adequately by the Cotton Control Board and the Unions and by the substitution of corporate spirit for individualism; by high wages; by a pool of fines imposed on those who worked more spindles and took more cotton than their due; and ends were met all round, but, however different the case of the munition trades, cotton was no beneficiary of the war.

The year 1919 brought a great and a dangerous reaction. It was seen by the foreign markets that their expectations of a spectacular fall in prices were not to be realized, and, for a time, buyers scrambled to supply, at any price, cotton goods to countries starved of cotton practically throughout the war. William looked back to his father's time when the margin of profit on a pound of yarn had been reckoned by an eighth or a farthing: it was now sixpence or more, and he trembled for the cotton trade. Such margins had the febrile unhealthiness of an overheated forcing-house. He hadn't expected peace to duplicate for him the conditions of 1913, but these profits, current in 1919, expressed for him the hazards of the peace. There was a madness in the very air, and a frenzy

of speculation resulted from this rebound of the cotton trade from war-depression to extreme buoyancy. The profits were notorious, and Labor could not be expected to remain without its share of the loot. That was reasonable enough, but William had no faith in the boom's lasting and knew the difficulty of persuading Labor to accept reduction when the tight times came. Meanwhile, certainly, Labor had a sound case for a large advance in wages, even though wages had steadily risen throughout the war. William wondered if any helmsman of Hepple stall's had ever faced such anxious times as these; the very appearance of prosperity, deceptive and fleeting as he held it to be, was incalculable menace. In spite of himself, he was a profiteer—not a war, but an as-a-result-of-the-war profiteer—and both hated and feared it. This was not peace but pyrotechny; they were up like a rocket and he feared to come down like the stick.

Lancashire was turned into a speculator's cockpit and cotton mill shares were changing hands sometimes at ten times their nominal value. The point, especially, was the prohibitive cost of building, so that existing mills had monopoly valuations. The general anticipation, which William did not share, was that a world hunger for cotton goods would sustain the boom for four or five years; there was plenty of war-made wealth ready for investment, and the cotton trade appeared a promising field for high and quick returns.

So much money was there and so attractive did cotton trade prospects appear that the local speculator began to be outbidden very greatly to his patriotic annoyance. The annoyance, indeed, was more than patriotic or parochial, it was sensible. A highly technical trade can be run to advantage only when its controllers have not only full technical knowledge, but full knowledge of local characteristics and prejudices, and Lancashire was, histori-

cally, self-supporting with its finance as well as its trade under Lancashire direction. From its brutal origins to its present comparatively humane organization, its struggles and its achievements had been its own.

The interests of the financier are financial; one-eyed, short-sighted, parasitic interests. Steam and the factory system fell like a blight on Lancashire, but they had in them the elements of progress of a kind; they worked out, outrageously, in the course of a century to a balance where the power was not exclusively the employers'. The object of the London financiers who now perceived in Lancashire a fruitful field was to buy up mills, run them under managers for the first years of the boom, then, before new mills could be built, to show amazing profits and to unload on the guileless public before the boom collapsed. It was a raid purely in financial interests and opposed to the permanent interests of Lancashire, which would be left to bear, in a new era of distress, the burdens imposed by over-capitalization. To the financier, Lancashire was a counter in whose future he had no interest after he had floated his companies and got out with his profits. And he collected mills like so many tricks in his game.

The owners were fraudulent trustees to sell even under temptation of such prices as were offered? Well, many did not sell, and for others there was the excuse, besides natural greed, of war-weariness. They had the feeling that here was security offered them, ease after years of strain; it was a *sauve qui peut* and the devil take the hindmost. They were men who hadn't been in business for their health and were offered golden opportunity to retire from business. They had been, perhaps, a little jealous of others who had made strictly war wealth, and this was their chance to get hold, at second hand, of a share of those war profits. There was the example of others . . . there would be stressful times ahead for the cotton trade

. . . Labor upheavals . . . it was good to be out of it all, with one's money gently in the Funds.

And Finance goes stealthily to work: it was not at first apparent, even to sellers, that behind the nominal buyers were non-Lancashire financiers. There was no immediate apprehension of the objects; nobody took quick alarm. Labor, especially the Oldham spinners, had cotton shares to sell and took a profit with the rest. They started a special share exchange in Oldham: it was open through the Christmas holidays and on New Year's Day of 1920. That speaks more than volumes for the dementia of that boom. Working on New Year's Day in Oldham! What was the use of being sentimentally annoyed at being out-bidden by a Londoner, even if you perceived he was a Londoner, when the congenital idiot offered ten pounds for a pound share on which you had only paid up five shillings?

Appetite grew by what it fed on and Finance ceased to be satisfied with acquiring small mills whose names, at any rate, were unknown to the outside investor. Hepplestall's was different, Hepplestall's was known to every shopkeeper and every housewife in the land. It was, in the opinion of Finance, only a question of price; and prices did not cow Finance.

William sat in the office of the Hepplestalls with a letter before him which was Finance's opening gambit in the game. It was addressed to him personally, marked "private and confidential," by a London firm of chartered accountants whose national eminence left no doubt of the serious intentions of their clients.

Which of us does not know the fearful joy of mental flirtation with crime? William, restraining his first sound impulse to tear up the letter and to put its fragments where they properly belonged, in the waste-paper basket, persuaded himself that his motive was simple curiosity. It had nothing to do with Gertrude, nor with her im-

patience of Rupert who was prolonging a holiday into a habit, and who, if he made no signal that her reign in Staithley Hall must end, made no signal, either, that his training for the Service must begin. By this time, William had, distinctly, his puzzled misgivings about Rupert, but he hadn't quite reached the point of seeing in Rupert's absence and his uncommunicativeness a deliberate challenge to the Service. He attributed to thoughtlessness an absence which was thoughtful.

He had at first no other idea than to calculate what fabulous figure would, in existing circumstances, be justly demanded for Hepplestall's on the ridiculous hypothesis of Hepplestall's being for sale. There was surely no harm on a slack morning in a little theoretic financial exercise of that kind. There wasn't; but, for all that, he went about the collecting of data, alone in his office under the pictured eyes of bygone Hepplestalls, with the furtive air of a criminal.

For insurance purposes, in view of post-war values, they had recently had a professional valuation made of the mills, machinery, office and warehouse buildings in Staithley and Manchester. Providential, William thought, meaning, of course, no more than that he need not waste more than an hour or so in satisfying his natural curiosity. It was, he asserted, defiantly daring the gaze of the Founder on the wall, natural to be curious.

He had the valuation for insurance before him now: he applied the multiplication table to reach an estimate of the market value. He meditated goodwill. Guiltily he attempted to capitalize the name of Hepplestall's, and it made him feel less guilty to capitalize it in seven figures. The total result was so large that, notwithstanding the national eminence of the chartered accountants whose letter was in his pocket, he felt justified in regarding his proceedings as completely extravagant.

So he might just as well amuse himself further. He might, for instance, refresh his memory of the distribution of Hepplestall's shares, and he might turn up the articles of association and see if that document, usually so comprehensive, had anticipated this unlikeliest of all improbabilities, a sale of Hepplestall's: and what emerged from his investigation was the fact that if he and Rupert voted, on their joint holdings of shares, for a sale at a legally summoned general meeting of Hepplestall's shareholders, a sale would be authorized. He and Rupert! William found himself sweating violently. It was impure, obscene nightmare, but style his communings what he would, the pass was there and he and Rupert had the power to sell it.

He rose and paced the room. War disintegrates, but not to this degree, not to the degree of dissipating the tradition of the Hepplestalls. He, the Head, the Chief Trustee, had meditated treachery, but only (he faced the portraits reassuringly), only speculatively, only in pursuit of a train of thought started by an impertinent letter, which he had not torn up. No, he had not torn it up, he had preserved it as laughable proof of the insensibility to finer issues of these financial people. He would show it to his brothers or to Rupert: it would become quite a family jest.

To Rupert? Indeed he ought to show it first to Rupert, the future Head. He could, jokingly, good-humoredly, use it as a lever to make Rupert conscious of his responsibilities, he could say "if you don't come quickly, there'll be no Hepplestall's for you to come to. Look at this letter. You and I, between us, have controlling interest; we could sell the firm, and the rest of the Board could not effectively prevent us. I'm joking, of course. That sort of thing isn't in the tradition of the Hepplestalls. And, by the way, speaking of the tradition, when are we to expect you amongst us?"

Something like that; not a bit a business letter, not

serious; genial and avuncular; but there was, manifestly, a Rupert affair, and this impudent inquiry of the eminent chartered accountants was the very means to bring the affair to a head. The boy was exceeding the license allowed even to one who had been in the war from the beginning; it was nearly a year since his demobilization.

William thought that his letter would seem more friendly if he addressed it from the Hall and looked in his desk for notepaper. He seemed to have run out of the supply of private notepaper he kept in his desk; then the spinning manager interrupted him. He put the letter in his pocket again: he would write to Rupert after lunch at the Hall.

He was busy for some time with the spinning manager, and went home convinced that the only serious thought he had ever had about the letter in his pocket was of its opportuneness in the matter of Rupert. It was nothing beyond a plausible excuse for writing to Rupert essentially on another subject and the figures in his note-book were not a traitor's secret but the meaningless result of a middle-aged gentleman's mental gymnastics.

He lunched alone with Gertrude and, "I'm writing to Rupert to-day," he said incautiously.

"Oh?" She bristled. "Why?"

He perceived and regretted his incaution. It was indiscreet to say that his object was to urge Rupert to Staithley when that coming could only mean Gertrude's going from the Hall. "Oh," he said, "I've to send on a letter which will amuse him." He had decided that the only use of that letter was humorous; it was a jest, questionable in taste but illustrative of the times and therefore to be mentioned in the family and preserved as a curiosity amongst the papers of the firm. And if it were going to be a family diversion, who had better right than William's wife to be the first to enjoy it with him? She had unreal grievances enough without his adding to them the real

grievance of his denying her the right to laugh at those harlequin accountants who so grotesquely misapprehended Hepplestall's. "This is the letter," he said, passing it across to her, expecting, actually, that she would smile.

She did not smile. "I see," she said, and, in fact, saw very well. Women's incomprehension of business has been exaggerated. "Why, to arrive at the figure they ask for would take weeks of work."

"I got at it roughly in half an hour this morning," he boasted.

"And sent it to them?" she asked quickly.

"Oh dear, no. I was only doing it as a matter of curiosity. If I sent them my result, I should frighten them."

"They must expect something big, though. Shan't you reply at all or are you consulting Rupert first?"

"I'd hardly say 'consult,'" he said. "I'm sending it him as I show it you—as a joke. I shall point out to him, as a form, that he and I between us have a controlling share interest. I shall jest about our powers. It's an opportunity of making Rupert awake to his responsibilities."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "I see. And you know best, dear." She was dangerously uncombative, arranging her mental notes that, though he derided the letter, he had prepared an estimate and that he was writing to Rupert who, with William, could take decisive action. By way purely of showing him how little seriously she took it, she changed the subject.

"I heard from Connie Duxbury this morning," she said.

"Not the most desirable of your acquaintances, I think," said William.

"Oh, my dear. Sir Ralph's a member of Parliament now."

"It isn't a certificate of respectability."

She looked thoughtfully at him, as he rose and went

into the library to write to Rupert, with the careful, anxious gaze of a wife who sees in her husband the symptoms of ill-health. She wished to leave Staithley for her own sake, but decidedly it was for William's sake as well. In Manchester, if he had not been advanced, if (for instance) his play at Bridge was circumspect while hers was dashing, he had been broadminded. She remembered that he had spoken of Sir Ralph as a profiteer, but had admitted that most of their friends were profiteers. Staithley, already, was narrowing William, in months. What would it not do for him in years? She must get him out of Staithley before it was too late.

He was writing to Rupert; so would she write to Rupert. She would assume, and she had her shrewd idea that the assumption was correct, that Rupert's views of Staithley marched with her own. She would paint in lurid colors a picture of life in Staithley; she would exhibit William, his furrowed brow, his whitening hair, as an awful warning; she would enlarge upon the post-war difficulties, so immensely more wearisome than in Sir Philip's time. She would suggest that the accountants' letter was a salvation, a means honorable and reasonable, of cutting the entail, of escaping from the Service. And she would tell him to regard her letter as confidential.

She had no doubt whatever of her success with Rupert and as to William, waverer was written all over him. Rupert's decision would decide William, and the William Hepplestalls would go to London. There were housing troubles, but if you had money and if you took time by the forelock, trouble melted. She proceeded to take time by the forelock and wrote to Lady Duxbury to ask her to keep an eye open for a large house near her own. She whispered to her dearest Connie in the very, very strictest confidence that Hepplestall's was going to be sold.

CHAPTER IX

MARY ARDEN'S HUSBAND

"**G**IVE up the stage!" echoed Mr. Chown, assuming an appearance of thunderstruck amazement.

"Don't act at me, my friend," said Mary. "You must have had the probability in mind ever since I told you I was married."

He had; that was the worst of women; an agent sweated blood to make a woman into a star, and the thankless creature married and retired. But Mary had not immediately retired and he thought he had reasonable grounds for hoping that she would continue to pay him his commission for many years; a woman who married well and yet remained on the stage could surely be acting only because she liked it, and Mr. Chown had a lure to dangle before her which could hardly fail of its effect upon any actress who cared two straws for her profession.

He remembered the day when he had rung up Rossiter and had said, "Mary's married," and Rossiter had replied, "Right, I'll watch her," and, a little later, had told him "Mary will do. She can play Sans-Gêne."

That was the bait he had for Mary. When (if ever), London tired of "Granada the Gay," she was to play Sans-Gêne. She was to stand absolutely at the head of her profession. He reviewed musical comedy and could think of no woman's part in all its repertoire which was so signally the blue riband of the lighter stage; and Rossiter destined it for the wear of Mary Arden!

"Listen to this, Mary. Do you know what Rossiter is doing next?"

"I'll see it from the stalls," she said.

"No. You'll be it. You'll be Sans-Gêne in 'The Duchess of Dantzig.' "

"I didn't tell you I'm retiring from the stage, did I? All I said was that it's possible."

"Ah!" said Chown, watching his bait at work.

"You're wrong," she said. "You're wrong."

He put his hand on hers. "Am I, Mary? Absolutely?"

"No," she confessed, "and I'm grateful. You've done many things for me and this is the biggest of them all. If I stay on the stage, I'll play it and I'll . . . I'll not make a failure. But you haven't tempted me to stay. I'm getting mixed. I mean I'm tempted, horribly. I've a megaphone in my brain that's shouting at me to damn everything and just jolly well show them what I can do with that part. But I won't damn everything. I won't forget the things that make it doubtful whether I'll stay on the stage or not. I'll give up Sans-Gêne rather than forget them, and I know as well as you do what Rossiter means by casting me for that part. He means that Mary's right there."

"Yes," said Chown, "he means that."

"It's decent of him. We'll be decent, too, please. We'll tell him there's a doubt."

"Look here, Mary, I know you well enough to ask. Is it a baby?"

She shook her head. "Not that sort of baby," she said, and puzzled him.

It was Rupert. In Mary's opinion, Rupert was in danger of becoming the husband of Mary Arden, one of those deplorable hangers-on of the theater who assert a busy self-importance because they are married to somebody who is famous. He hadn't, quite, come to that yet, but it was

difficult to see what else he could assert of himself beyond his emphatic negative against going to Staithley; and she proposed very definitely that he should not come to it, either. He should not, even if she had to leave the stage, even if she must sacrifice so great, so climactic a part as *Sans-Gêne*.

She had not come painlessly to that opinion of him. She had not watched him since his demobilization and she had not come to her profound conviction that something was very wrong with Rupert, without feeling shame at her scrutiny and distrust of this love of hers which could disparage. At first, while he was still at the Front, she went on acting simply to drug anxiety. She acted on the stage by night and for the films by day, and later it was to see if she could not, by setting an example, persuade him that work was a sound diet; and now she was afraid that the example had miscarried and that her associations with the stage were doing him a mischief. To work in the Galaxy was one thing, to loaf in it another, and he, who had no work to do there, was in it a good deal.

If Rupert was developing anything, it was listlessness. He had an animal content in Mary, and was allowing a honeymoon to become a routine. Perhaps because she was a certainty and because the war had sated him with hazards, he could not bear to be away from her. She had suggested Cambridge and, though it was flat, was ready to go there with him. He went and looked at Cambridge, found it overcrowded and returned to London. Through the summer he played some cricket, in minor M. C. C. matches, and did not find his form. He thought of golf for the winter, found that the good clubs had long waiting lists, and, though friends offered to rush him in, refused to have strings pulled for him.

Privately, he had self-criticism and tried to stifle it. There was a miasma of disillusionment everywhere; there

was the Peace that was mislaid by French pawnbrokers instead of being made by gentlemen; there was the impulse to forget the war on the part of the civilian population who now seemed so brutally in possession; there was the treatment of disbanded soldiery which, this time, was to have belied history, and didn't. He strained to believe the current dicta of the minority mind and to find in them excuse for his lethargy.

He was, no doubt, tired; but whatever subtle infections of the soul might be distressing him, materially at any rate he was immune from the common aggravation of high prices. He made that explicitly one of his excuses. It wasn't fair that he, who had all the money he needed, should take a job from a man who needed money. "There's unpaid work," thought Mary, but she did not say it. She thought he must sooner or later see it for himself.

He did see it and tried to blink at it. He was of the Hepplestalls, of a race who weren't acclimatized to leisure, who found happiness in setting their teeth in work. He was born with a conscience and couldn't damp it down. He was aware, at the back of behind, that it was hurting him to turn a deaf ear to the call of Staithley. He had done worse things than Staithley implied in the necessity of war, and there was also a necessity of peace. He felt nobly moral to let such sentiments find lodgment in his mind.

His father's diffident comparison of the Hepplestalls with the Samurai came back to him. Yes, one ought to serve, but it wasn't necessary to go to Staithley to be a Samurai. One could be a Samurai in London. He, decisively, was forced to be a Samurai in London because he had married Mary Arden and to wrench her from her vocation, to take her away from London, was unthinkable.

There was no hurry to set about discovering the place of a Samurai in modern London. Like everybody else he had, with superlative reason, promised himself a good time after the war, and if the good time had its unforeseen drawbacks, that was no ground for refusing to enjoy all the good there was. Mary was not the whole of the good time, but she was its center. He supposed he couldn't—certainly he couldn't; there were other things in life than a wife—concentrate indefinitely on Mary, but this world of the theater to which she belonged was so jolly, so strange to him, so unaccountably entralling. He became expert in its politics and its gossip. He was obsessed by it through her who had never been obsessed. He was duped, as she had never been since Hugh Darley applied his corrective to her childish errors, by the terribly false perspective of the theater. He saw the theater, indeed, in terms of Mary; several times a week he sat through her scenes in a stall at the Galaxy, and when she scoffed at the idiotic pride he took in gleaning inside information, in knowing what so and so was going to do before the announcement appeared in the papers, and at being privileged to go to some dress-rehearsals, it was, he thought, only because she was used to it all while he came freshly to it. He might even find that a Samurai was needed in the theater. Would Mary like him to put up a play for her? He thought her reply hardly fair to the excellence of his intentions. But if she refused, incisively, to let him be a Samurai of the theater, she was troubled to see him continue his education of an initiate.

He was self-persuaded that his fussy loafing had importance, when it was, at most, a turbid retort to conscience. He was feeling his way, he was learning the ropes, he was meditating his plans, and there was no lack of flattering council offered to the husband of Mary Arden who was, besides, rich.

**Big fleas have little fleas
Upon their backs to bite 'em
These fleas have other fleas
And so, ad infinitum.**

Morally, he was the little flea on Mary's back, and he was collecting parasites on his own. Then William's letter came, offering a clean cut from Staithley and an annihilating reply to his conscience.

He didn't need Gertrude's letter to show him exactly what William's and William's enclosure meant. He read clearly between the lines that William wobbled. "He's on the fence," he thought, "he doesn't need a push to shove him over, - 't's a touch." Then Rupert and William, act~~ing~~ together, must face a hostile Board of conservative Hepplestalls, and a nasty encounter he expected it to be. They wouldn't spare words about his father's son.

But that was a small price to pay for freedom; Rupert and William had the whip hand and the rest of the Hepplestalls could howl, they could—they would; he could hear them—shriek “Treachery” and “Blasphemy” at him, but it was only a case of keeping a stiff upper lip through an unpleasant quarter of an hour, and he was quit of the Service for ever. There would no longer be a Service.

That was a tremendous thought, breath-catching like—oh, like half a hundred things which had happened to him in France. Yes, that was the true perspective. The war had played the deuce with tradition, it had finished bigger things than the service of the Hepplestalls. They would have to see, these Hepplestalls, that he was a man of the new era, a realist, not to be bamboozled by their antique sentimentalities. If they wanted still to serve, it could be arranged, as part of the conditions of the purchase, that they should serve the incoming owner. He was disobliging nobody.

He looked up to find Mary studying his face. "Sorry, old thing," he said, "but these are rather important Letters from Staithley."

"Staithley!"

"Yes. I expect you'd forgotten there is such a place. I haven't spoken of it, but Staithley has been in my mind a good deal lately. I've found myself wondering if I was altogether right in giving it the go-by. I've wondered if I quite played the game." It didn't hurt to say these things now that the means to abolish the Service were in his hands; he could admit aloud to Mary what he hadn't cared, before, to admit to himself. And he was too interested in his point of view to note the quick thankfulness in Mary's face, and her joy at his confession. Complacently he went on, "That's putting it too strongly, but . . . ancestors. It's absurd, but I've been in the street and I've had the idea that one of those musty old fellows who are hung up on the walls in Hepplestall's office was following me about, going to trip me up or knock me on the head or something. I've looked over my shoulder. I've jumped into a taxi. Nerves, of course, and you'd have thought my nerves were tough enough at this time of day. I'm telling you this so that you'll rejoice with me in these letters. They're the answer to it all. There's no question about playing the game when the game's no longer there to play."

He gave her the letters. She hadn't known how much she had continued to be hopeful of the Staithley idea, not for herself, not for a Bradshaw who might live in Staithley Hall, but for him; and his admission that Staithley had been in his mind was evidence that he knew occultly the root cause of his derangement. These letters, he told her, were the answer to it all, and they could be nothing but the call to Staithley, an ultimatum which he meant to obey, of which he had the charming grace to admit that he was

glad. Indeed, indeed, she would rejoice with him. He was going to Staithley, to work, to be cured by work and the tonic air of the moors of the poison London had dropped into his system.

"This will finish off that old bogey," he exulted and she exulted with him as she bent her eyes to read the letters. She read and saw with what disastrous optimism she had misunderstood. And he stood there aglow with happiness, expectant of her congratulations when this was not the beginning of new life but the death of hope! "Well?" he asked. "Well?"

"It does seem to depend on you," she hedged.

"Uncle William would if he dared, eh? He's as good as asking me to dare for him, and I'll dare all right. I'll wire that I'll see him to-morrow afternoon. That's soon enough. I'll go by car. It's a beastly railway journey."

"Aren't you deciding very quickly, Rupert?"

"I thought for a solid five minutes before I handed the letters across to you." He was most indignant at her imputation of hastiness.

"I was watching you. Five minutes! Not long to give to the consideration of a death sentence."

"A—what?"

"Staithley. Staithley Mills without the Hepplestalls!"

"Oh, they'll survive it. This thing's a gift from God, and I'm not going to turn my back on the deity. It's bad manners. Candidly, I'm surprised at you, Mary. You might be thinking there's something to argue about. You might be sentimental for the Hepplestalls."

"No," she said. "For a Hepplestall. For you. Rupert, I'll leave the stage to-morrow if you will go and do your work at Staithley."

"Good Lord! Besides, aren't you rather forgetting? Aren't you forgetting you're a Bradshaw?"

"It is quite safe to forget that. I'm Mary Arden.

Nobody knows me. It's too long since I was anything but that."

"Oh, it wouldn't do. Too risky altogether. Oh, never. Staithley's the one place that's absolutely barred."

"Rupert, you're making me responsible. You're using me as your excuse."

"Damn it, Mary, do you want us to live in Staithley?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry. We can't. I do you the justice to tell you I've never found you a capricious woman before. But it's plain that this is one of the times when a man has to put his foot down on . . . on sentimentality and all that sort of thing."

"Your conscience was troubling you, Rupert."

"It was, I've admitted it. And this letter is my quit-tance. It washes conscience out. It closes the account."

"No. You're still troubled."

"I'll be hanged! Do you keep my conscience?"

"I want us to go to Staithley, Rupert."

"This time, I can't give you what you want, Mary. I'm going to Staithley alone, for the purpose of cutting Staithley out of my life for ever. I'm sorry about your attitude. I'm completely fogged by it, but I'm not going to talk about it any more. This is the nearest we've ever come to quarreling and we'll get no nearer. I'll go along for the car now."

"Just one moment first, though. You say you're putting your foot down. I have a foot as well as you."

"I adore your foot, Mary. If I were a sculptor—"

"Seriously, Rupert, I'm going to fight this. You're doing wrong, you know you're doing wrong—"

"Fight?" he said. "My dear Mary, perhaps you own half of Hepplestell's shares? Now I'd an idea it was I."

"Yes, it is you. It's the man I love, and I won't see you do this rotten thing and raise no hand to stop you."

"There are two things that I deny. It isn't rotten and you can't stop me. So, won't you just admit that you're a woman and that you're out of your depth? Let's kiss and be friends."

"When we've just declared war?" she smiled.

"Oh, that's rubbish. You've no munitions, my dear."

"I've love," she said, "and love will find me weapons. Perhaps love won't be particular what weapons it finds, either. If love finds poison-gas, you won't forget there's love behind the gas, will you? I want you to understand. You offered me something. You offered to put Mary Arden in a theater of her own. Well, it's the dream of every actress and God knows it's good enough for Mary Arden. To be in management, and in management where there's lots of money to do exactly as I want!"

"And more money when this sale's gone through," he said eagerly.

"Yes," she said, "it's fine for Mary. It's more than good enough for her. But it isn't good enough for Mary's Rupert. Don't you see it? You must, you must. To be running an entertainment factory, when you might be running Hepplestall's?"

"You know, you're looking at the theater through the wrong end of the telescope, and at Hepplestall's through the right. You haven't a notion of the wonderful things I'd planned to do for you in the theater. You've never let me speak of them. And it isn't running Hepplestall's either. Not for a long time. If I just went up there and walked into the office as head of Hepplestall's, there might be some sense in what you say, but I don't do that. I go into the mills and spin and do all sorts of footling jobs for years. Years, I tell you," he shouted and then it occurred to him that he was arguing and had said he would not argue. "The simple fact is that you don't know what

you're talking about and that I do. We'll let it rest at that, except that I'm now going for the car."

"And except," said Mary, "that I am fighting."

"You darling," he said contemptuously, and went out.

Advocacy has its perils for the advocate. In the heat of argument, she had felt confident of her weapon and now she doubted if it were a weapon or hers to use. In promising Rupert a fight she had Tom Bradshaw in mind; it had seemed to her that Labor had only to lift its voice in order to obtain anything it demanded, and wasn't Tom member for Staithey? But now that Rupert had gone and she was able coolly to examine the weapon she proposed to enlist, she couldn't imagine why she ever thought it would fight in her cause. Why should she, after so many years, have thought of Tom at all? He had nothing to thank her for; that much was certain, but she had instinctively thought of him as her true ally in her struggle for the soul of Rupert Hepple stall. So, though she saw no reason in it, she would carry out her intention, she would send for Tom Bradshaw. If he was nothing else, he was a Staithey man, and he was something else. He was a Bradshaw. So was she. That was reason enough to send for him.

Time was against her and she didn't know how to set about finding his address, but the paper informed her—she didn't as a rule take stock of the fact—that the House was sitting. A phrase caught her eye. "Labor members absented themselves from the debate." Suppose he were absent to-day? She could only try. She wrote—

DEAR MR. BRADSHAW:

I am writing in case I do not find you at the House. I want to see you urgently. You may possibly have noticed that Sir Rupert Hepple stall married Mary Arden of the Galaxy Theatre. I enclose tickets for both this afternoon and to-night. I must see you, please. If I am on the stage when you come, have a look at me, but come

round behind the moment I am off. They will bring you to me at once. Failing that, telephone me here. It is really important.

Yours sincerely,

MARY HEPPLESTALL.

She meant to have written that Mary Arden was Mary Ellen Bradshaw, but she couldn't resist, even in her anxiety, springing that surprise upon him when he heard her speaking the tongue of Staithley on the stage. He might know already, he might have seen the piece. She wasn't unsophisticated enough to suppose that Labor members were any more austere in their recreations than other people, but Tom wasn't likely to frequent musical comedy. He liked music.

She went to the theater for the tickets, enclosed them with her letter and took it to the House of Commons, where she was assured that Tom would certainly receive it during the day. That was comforting as far as it went, and what went further was that both policemen of whom she enquired in the precincts of the House addressed her as "Miss Arden." There are people who do not gain confidence by finding themselves known to the police. Mary was helped just then to be reminded that she was famous.

She had conquered London; surely she could conquer Rupert Hepple stall.

Reading her letter, Tom couldn't imagine what need she had of him in that galley, but the Coalition could coalesce without his opposition for an hour or two that afternoon, and he might as well go and see what was perturbing her play-acting Ladyship.

He followed instructions, went to the front of the house and asked Rossiter's impressive attendant if Miss Arden was at that moment on the stage. "Mr. Bradshaw, Sir?" He was, and a surprised and flattered Mr. Bradshaw by the time the Galaxy staff had ushered him to his stall with

the superlative deference shown to those about whom they had special instructions. He was not royalty, and he was not received by Mr. Rossiter, but he was Miss Arden's guest and the technique of his welcome was based accurately on that of Hubert Rossiter receiving royalty.

As a Labor Member he ought, properly, to have scowled at flunkeydom; he ought to have bristled at the full house, at the sight of so many people idle in the afternoon; and he did neither of these reasonable things. He was in the Galaxy, and, besides, he was looking at the stage and on a bit of authentic Lancashire on the stage. "Yon wench is the reet stuff," he thought, slipping mentally back into the vernacular. "By gum, she is." She was remarkably the right stuff; if his ear went for anything, she was Staithley stuff. That must be why she seemed familiar to him as if he had met her, or somebody very like her. But he decided that he hadn't met her; he had only met typical Lancashire women, and this was the sublimation of the type. She finished her scene and left the stage. An attendant was murmuring softly to him. Would he go round and see Miss Arden now?

Tom pulled himself together. A queer place, the theater, making a man forget so completely that he was there on business. It dawned upon him that this Lancashire witch he had gazed at with such absorbed appreciation was Mary Arden, Lady Hepplestall. "If she wants anything of me that's mine to give, it's hers for the asking," he thought, as he followed his guide, still chuckling intimately at the racy flavor of her; no bad compliment to an actress who was thinking that day of anything but acting.

She awaited him in her room unchanged, in the clogs and shawl of the first act, which were not very different, except in cleanliness, from the clothes Mrs. Butterworth had burned.

"Well, Mr. Bradshaw," she greeted him, "and who am I?"

"Who are you? Why, Lady Hepplestall."

"You've seen me from the front, haven't you? And you didn't know me? I'm safer than I thought I was. Will it help you if I mention Walter Pate?"

It didn't; he saw nothing in this splendid woman to take him back to the starveling waif whom Pate and he adopted or to the crude, if physically more developed, girl he had seen on one or two later occasions at Staithley. Mary relished his bewilderment: if Rupert made seriously the point against going to Staithley that she was Bradshaw, here was apt confirmation of her reply that nobody would know her. Tom Bradshaw saw her in clogs and shawl and did not know her. She hummed a bar or two of "Lead Kindly Light."

"Mary Ellen!" he cried. "Yes, I ought to have seen it. But Lady Hepplestall to Mary Ellen Bradshaw. It's a long way to look."

"And you don't much care to look? Not at that thankless girl who bolted."

But she was Lady Hepplestall and she was the artist, yes, by God, the artist, who had gripped him magically five minutes ago. He could not see her as a Bradshaw. "You've traveled far since then," he said ungrudgingly. "I'm proud I was in at the start."

"I wrote to you," she said, "because I wanted help. I don't know why it came to me that you were the one person who could help and even when I wrote I saw no reason in it. No reason at all. Instinct, perhaps. We're both Bradshaws, and he's a Hepplestall, but I'm not pretending that I care about this thing except as it concerns my husband. I do think it concerns a lot of other people, but I don't care for them. I don't care if it's good or bad for them, and this is just a matter between my husband

and myself. You see how little reason I have to suppose that you'll do anything."

"The way you're putting it is that I'm to interfere between man and wife. That's a mug's game. But you can go on. I'm here to hear."

"If I knew that mine was just a war marriage, I think I'd kill myself. It isn't yet, but he's in danger, and he can be saved. It'll save him if he'll go to Staithley and take up his work."

"Hasn't he yet?"

"No: he's killing time in London."

He looked at her, wondering if he could accuse her of playing the Syren. If Mary Ellen piped, a man would dance to her tune and small blame to him either; but he couldn't assume that she was holding Rupert in London when it was she who saw salvation for him in Staithley. If he had to take a side, he took hers so far as to say, "A work-shy Hepple stall is something new."

"You're thinking that it's my fault," she said. "You're thinking of me that first time you met Mary Ellen. You're thinking of her 'A 'ate th' Epplestalls.'"

"I did think of it," he admitted. "Then I thought again. He ought to be in Staithley."

"And he's on his way there now to sell Hepple stall's."

"What?" said Tom, rising to his feet, with his hand tugging at his collar as a flush, almost apoplectic, discolored his neck. "What! Sell Hepple stall's!"

She told him of the letters. "And you thought it was no business of mine?" he said. "You saw no reason in sending for me? Instinct, eh! Well, thank God for instinct then. Sell Hepple stall's! By God, they won't. Who to? To a damned syndicate, that offers through a London accountant? Londoners! outsiders! Know-nothing grab-alls that have the same idea of Trades Unions as they have of Ireland. There's been too much of this

selling of Lancashire to pirates, and happen Labor's been dull about it, and all. But Hepplestall's. I didn't think they'd go for Hepplestall's. That's big business, if you like; that's swallowing the camel but they're not to do it, Mary, and if you want to know who'll stop them, I will." He was racing up and down her room, not like a caged tiger which only paces, but like an angry man who tries to move his legs in time with rushing thought. "Ugh! you don't know what you've done, letting this cat out of the bag. I'll be careful for your sake, but I tell you I'm tempted to be careless. Would you like to know what they called me in the *Times* the other day? An Elder Statesman of the Labor Party. That means I've gone to sleep, with toothless jaws that couldn't bite a millionaire if I caught his hand in my pocket. It means I'm a harmless fossil and you can bet your young life the bright lads of the advanced movement that think Tom Bradshaw lives by selling passes are on to that damned phrase. If I go down to Staithley and call the young crowd together and tell them this, I could blossom into an idol of the lads. They're ready for any lead, but it'd let hell loose in Lancashire and I'll not do it if I can find another way. I'll be an elder statesman, but if the Hepplestalls don't like my British statesmanship, by God, I'll give 'em Russian. I'll show them there's to be an end of this buying and selling Labor like cattle."

Mary sat overwhelmed by the spate she had provoked; she hadn't dreamed that she would so strangely touch him on the raw, and he, too, sat, shaken, hiding his face in his hands on her dressing-table. Presently he looked up, and she saw that the storm had passed. "I'm an old fool," he said, "ranting like a boy. But I'm upset. I didn't think it of the Hepplestalls. This lad of yours . . . what would Sir Philip have thought of him?"

She was fighting Rupert, and Tom Bradshaw was the

ally she had called to help her, but she was stung to seek defense for him. "Sir Philip did not go through the war, as Rupert did," she said. "All that's the matter with Rupert is that he is still—still rather demobilized."

"Post-war," groaned Tom. "I know. It's the word for everything that's deteriorated; but Hepplestall's shan't go post-war."

She spoke of William, and, "Aye," he agreed. "I know William. William's weak—for a Hepplestall. Well, it's those two then. Your spark and William. I think I can do it, Mary. They meet to-morrow, eh? Well, it won't be the duet they think it will. It will be a trio and I'll be singing to a tune of my own."

"If," said Mary, "it isn't a quartette. I'm coming with you. It'll make my understudy grateful, anyhow"

CHAPTER X

THE PEAK IN DARIEN

RUPERT was annoyed, and annoyed with himself for being annoyed, when he drove up to the main gate of Staithley Mills on the following afternoon and found that the gate-keeper did not know him. It was plainly the man's duty to warn strangers off the premises, and Rupert was, by hypothesis and in fact, a stranger, but he felt it a reproach that Sir Rupert Hepplestall was forced to make himself known to Hepplestall's gate-keeper.

The man, an old workman, who preferred this mildly honorific wardenship to a pension, made him a back-handed apology. "It's so long sin' we've seen thee," he said. "Us had a hoam-coming ready for thee arter the war, but tha' didno come." No stirring and no obsequiousness from this old servant of the firm, and Rupert gave a quick, resentful glance as he pulled the car up in the yard.

Then he remembered that this was Lancashire—and he knew now what Lancashire thought of him. There was no reason why he should, and every reason why he should not, care what Lancashire thought, seeing that he came there solely to arrange his clean cut from Staithley; but an old fellow in a factory yard who did not scrape, but told him frankly that he had not come up to local expectations, had been able to thwack him shrewdly.

It was not much better after that to be treated like a prodigal, to be conducted possessively to the office en-

trance and to hear the gate-keeper announce in a great and genial voice, "I've a glad surprise for yo'. There's th' young maister."

He was not and he refused to be "th' young maister," but he could not explain to this guide that he wasn't what he seemed; the infernal fellow was so naively proud to be his herald. "I feel like Judas," he thought, and tried wryly to laugh the thought away. It was a tremendous and a preposterous simile to be occasioned by the candid loyalty of one old workman, but things did not go much better with him inside the offices.

Theoretically, they should have shrunk, to his maturer gaze, from his boyish recollection of them, but they were authentically impressive. He couldn't think lightly of this regiment of desks, nor could he pretend that the eyes which turned towards him as his loud-voiced pilot announced him, were hostile. Theory was in chancery again; all employees ought to hate all employers, but the elderly gentlemen who were hastening towards him wore on their faces expressions of genuine pleasure instead of the decent deference that might cloak a mortal hatred. Ridiculously as if he had been indeed a prince on the day when Sir Philip took him round and introduced him, he discovered a royal memory, and remembered their names. It was developing into a reception; this wasn't at all what he had come for. He wondered what the younger clerks were thinking, men of his own age, ex-service men, but he had not the chance even to look at them. A positive guard of honor was escorting him to William's room, that joss-house of the Hepplestalls.

If only he could laugh at their formality and at their quaint appreciativeness of his knowing their names! He felt he ought to laugh; he felt it was all something out of Dickens. Or if he could blurt out that he had come to slip the collar for ever from his neck! They would scuttle

from him as though he were the plague; but he could neither laugh aloud nor tell the truth to those solemn mandarins. They were not pompous fools, or he could have laughed, he could have scattered them impishly with his truth; but they were captains in a Service where promotion went by merit, they were proven efficients in an organization whose efficiency was world-renowned, and their homage was not absurd because it was paid not to the young man, Rupert Hepplestall, but to Sir Philip's son, to the successor to the Headship of the Service. That made it the more hypocritical in him to seem to accept their homage, but if he was going to forfeit what good opinion they retained of a truant, he was going to keep it, at any rate, until the die was unalterably cast.

It was certain to be cast, but Hepplestall's was retorting on him with unexpected power. Mary was right: the bigness of Hepplestall's had been escaping him. From London the sale had seemed no more than signatures on documents, and a check. Up here, confronted with Staithley Mills as so much brick, mortar and machinery, and confronted with no more than one crude loyalist in the yard and half a dozen graybeards of the Service in the office, the thing loomed colossal. Let it loom: he held its future in the hollow of his hand, and this, of all times, was no moment for second thoughts. He had to tackle William, the waverer, the fence-sitter who must be met with firmness, and not by one who was himself momentarily awed by the bigness of Hepplestall's into being a waverer. With the air of nailing his colors to the mast, even if they were the skull and crossbones, he recovered his resolution in the moment when that ambassadorial figure, the Chief Cashier of Hepplestall's, threw open William's door and announced "Sir Rupert Hepplestall"; and a grave assurance, inflexible and self-reliant, seemed to enter the room with him.

William raised careworn eyes as this bright incarnation of sanguine youth came into the office in which he sat almost as if it were a condemned cell. He knew, better than Rupert who knew the Hepplestalls so little, what wrath would come when they two faced an outraged Board, and this sedate, this almost smiling confidence seemed to him as offensive as buffoonery at a funeral. "You look very cheerful," he greeted his nephew resentfully.

"Why not?" said Rupert. "It's a mistake to call optimism a cheap virtue. How are you, Uncle?"

"I suppose you slept last night," was the reply from which Rupert was to gather that sleep at such a crisis was considered gross.

"Yes, thanks," he said. "At Matlock. I drove up quietly, because I wanted to think. Really, of course, I'd decided in the first five minutes after opening your letter."

"You decided very quickly," said William, who had come to no decision.

"My wife made the same remark," said Rupert. "But that's a day and a half ago, and my first opinion stands. I've decided to sell." Speaking, he gave a just perceptible jerk of the head which William remembered as a characteristic of Sir Philip when he, too, announced one of his quick decisions, and the little movement was not a grateful sight to William. Sir Philip's son had his father's trick and, it seemed, his father's way of arriving rapidly at a conclusion. William, victim to irresolution as he always was, was sliding off his fence into opposition, through nothing more logical than jealousy of this boy who had the gift of making up his mind swiftly. "Am I to understand that your wife has other views?" he asked. It was hardly likely in such a wife, in an actress, but Rupert's words seemed to suggest that Mary had given him pause, and if William was going to oppose this headstrong boy, any ally, however unlikely, would be welcome.

But, "Wives don't count in this," said Rupert briskly, and, he thought, truthfully. It was true at any rate between Rupert and the wife of William; Rupert's decision had been made before he opened Gertrude's prompting letter. But William and William's wife were another matter, and William shuffled uneasily on his chair as he admitted the influence in this crisis of the Service of Gertrude who was not born a Hepplestall. He must be strong.

"Quite right," he said firmly. "Wives don't count. But it isn't the case that you decide, Rupert. The Board decides."

"I make it from your letter that for the practical purposes of this deal, you and I decide."

"It still is not the case that you decide."

"Oh, naturally, when I said I'd decided, I meant as regards myself. I'm here to get your views. But, even if you're against me, Uncle, that won't stop me from going on. I mean there may be others who aren't romantic about Hepplestall's. I may find others who'll pool their shares with mine in favor of a sale."

William inclined to tell him to go and try. He didn't think it likely that there would be any others, but if there were, let them join with Rupert and let William be able to say that his hand was forced. It would be a comforting solution.

"You're hoping it, Uncle. I'm perfectly aware you want to sell. Why did you write to me at all if you didn't want to sell?"

"Is that fair, Rupert? You would have been the first to blame me if I had not told you of this."

"I should never have known anything about it. I know nothing of lots of important things you decide."

"And doesn't that seem a shameful thing for your father's son to have to say, Rupert? Suppose I sent you

that letter just to make you see what sort of important things we had to decide in your absence. To arouse your sense of responsibility."

"That cock won't fight, Uncle. You could decide other things very well without me. You could decide this, too, if the decision were a negative. But the decision you hoped for was an affirmative and so you wrote to me. Are you going to deny that you hoped I'd want to sell?"

"You're . . . you're very headstrong, Rupert."

"I've come here to get down to facts. And the flat fact is that both you and I want to sell. You want more pleasure in life than being Head of Hepplestell's allows you. You want to get out and I don't mean to get in. We both know that from the point of view of those old Johnnies on the wall"—William shuddered at his catastrophic levity—"it's a crime to sell Hepplestell's. But I'm not a Chinaman and I won't worship my ancestors. I've my own view of the sort of life I mean to live. And we both know that the whole of the rest of the Board may be against us and that some of them virulently will. Very well, then we don't tell the Board before it's necessary. We go into the question of price, and we quote the figure to these accountants. We see what reply we draw. As to the price, that's your affair."

"Well," confessed William, "tentatively, purely as a matter of curiosity, I have gone into that."

"Uncle," said Rupert, surprising William with a giant's hand-grip, "you and I speak the same language. And we won't stammer, either. These accountants wrote to you, so the reply must be from you. You have not had an opportunity to consult your Board and you speak for yourself in estimating the market value of Hepplestell's at so much. This figure should not be regarded as the basis of negotiation, but as the minimum financial consideration on which other terms of sale could be founded. Some-

thing like that, eh? Now show me the figure and tell me how you arrived at it."

From nephew to uncle, this did not strain courtesy; it was hot pace-making irresistibly recalling to William occasions when Sir Philip, well in his stride, had made him wonder whether such alert efficiency was quite gentlemanly. But with the figures in his pocket he had been no sloven himself, and if Rupert and he did indeed speak the same language, he hadn't stammered.

At the same time, this production of the figures, to one so pertinacious as Rupert, advanced matters to a stage from which there was no retreat and he hesitated until a thought, sophistical but consoling, came into his mind. He had heard it rumored that the Banks were beginning to frown on the excessive speculation in mills; of course, and time, too. The Government had cried, "Trade! Trade!" and had inspired the Banks to encourage trade by lending money readily. Then it was found that too much of the money lent was being used not for sound trade but for speculation, and borrowers were faced with a decided change of front on the part of bank managers. William conveniently forgot that the type of rich man behind the accountants who had written to him would be above the caprice of bank managers, and decided happily that the whole affair had merely an academic interest; in that case, there was no harm in discussing the figures with Rupert behind the backs of the rest of the Board, and in submitting them to London. The nationally eminent accountants would have been infuriated to know that William Hepplestall imagined them capable of having to do with a mare's-nest; but that it was all a mare's-nest was the salve he applied to his conscience as he went to the safe to collect his data for Rupert.

Rupert had no sophistical conclusions to draw from a general situation of which he knew nothing; it was clear

to him that they had passed the turning-point and were safely on the tack for home. There would be any amount of detail to be settled, but the supreme issue was decided; William and he were at one, and Hepplestall's was to be sold! No wonder he had hectored a little. He had had to rout William and not only William but the belated hesitations in himself born of his dismay at the formidable size of Hepplestall's; and success had justified his methods. In here, the massiveness of the mills did not oppress and a modern man whose thinking was not confused by the portraits of his ancestors could see this thing singly, stripped of sentiment, in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. If Staithley Mills were large, so would be the figure William was to declare; if the tradition was fine, it was commutable into the greater number of thousands. That was sanity, anything else was muddled-headedness, and he awaited William's scratches on paper as one who has swept away obfuscating side-issues and concentrates on essentials.

"It makes a very considerable total, Rupert," said William gravely.

"We've got used to considerable totals, haven't we? I don't suppose it's more than a day's cost of the war."

"Then I've a surprise for you," said William.

"Yes?" asked Rupert with an eager anticipation which was hardly due to greed so much as to impatience to learn what fabulous key to the pageant of life was to be his to turn. Let it only be big enough and he had no doubt that it would dazzle Mary out of her queer, old-fashioned timidities. He stood upon his peak in Darien. "Yes," he asked again as William paused, not because he had a sense of the dramatic but because he was nervous.

There was a knock at the door, apologetic if ever knock apologized, and an embarrassed henchman of the Service came in upon William's indignant response.

"I wouldn't dream of disturbing you, sir, but Lady Hepplestall is here."

"My wife?" cried Rupert, hoping against hope that it was his mother.

"Yes, Sir Rupert, and Bradshaw's with her. Mr. Bradshaw of the spinners. The M. P. He . . . well, sir, he put it that he knew you didn't want to be interrupted and he's come to interrupt."

"Thank you," said William. "We will not keep Lady Hepplestall waiting." William was very dignified as he said the only possible thing, and he hoped Rupert would perceive in his dignity a reproach to his own exhibition of crude amazement before an understrapper. Rupert was ludicrously like a boy caught in the act of robbing an orchard, and William's eye was alight as he contrasted this crestfallen Rupert with the Rupert who had declared roundly that "Wives don't count in this." William had hopes of Mary, who was shown in with Tom before Rupert had time to attempt an explanation of her presence to his uncle.

Rupert recovered himself and made a tolerable show of hauteur; he wasn't the small boy in the apple orchard but a very grand gentleman making his pained protest at her intrusion. "Mary!" he began.

"No, not now, Rupert," she checked him. "I'm here to watch. I told Mr. Bradshaw and he is here to speak." To watch, she did not add, with desperately anxious eyes the effect upon him both of her summons to Tom and of what Tom had to say. She thought she had saved Hepplestall's, she thought Tom had a medicine that would cure them of their wish to sell, but had she saved Rupert? That was her larger question and she saw no answer to it yet. She was there to watch and pray.

"Well," said Tom, "that's a good opening. As she

says, Lady Hepplestell told me what you're up to and we're saved the trouble of bluffing round the point. You're out to sell Hepplestell's; I'm here to stop you."

"The devil you are," cried Rupert.

Tom turned to William. "Does Sir Rupert know I'm secretary of the Spinners' Union?" he asked.

"Indeed?" said Rupert. "And what business may this be of the Spinners' Union, or any other Union?"

"Vital business," said Tom, "of theirs and every other cotton trade Union. I'm usually asked to sit down in this office, Mr. Hepplestell."

"You are usually asked to come into it, Mr. Bradshaw. You have hardly asked to-day," said William.

"Please yourself," said Tom. "I've been sitting a long while in the train. I can stand, only I've a bad habit of making speeches when I'm on my feet and I'd as lief have had this friendly."

It surprised and annoyed Rupert that William pointed to a chair with an "If you please, Mr. Bradshaw." Himself, he would have kicked the confounded fellow into the street and when he had gone it would have been Mary's turn for—not for kicking, certainly, but for something severe in the way of disciplinary measures. "Friendly!" he scoffed.

"What you might call a benevolent enemy, Sir Rupert," said Tom. "If I weren't benevolent, I'd have gone into Staithley streets and cried it aloud that Hepplestell's was being sold to Londoners, and I'd have watched the hornets sting you. But, being benevolent, I'd rather you didn't get stung, and I'm here till I get your assurance that all thought of a sale is off."

"That means you're making quite a long stay with us, Mr. Bradshaw," said Rupert elaborately.

"I wonder how much you know of the Staithley folk, Sir Rupert," said Tom. "They're fighting stock. You

maybe know there's a likely chance of things coming to a big strike in the cotton trade on the wages question, but that's not just yet and if you don't watch it there'll be an urgency strike in Staithley that might begin to-night. One of these wicked strikes you read about. Without notice."

"But you . . . Mr. Bradshaw, you're the chief Union official."

"Oh, yes," said Tom, "and officially the strike would be unofficial. But I'd be roundabout, unofficially. Rum sort of strike, eh? Striking against the Hepplestalls for the Hepplestalls, and a Bradshaw leading it. If you knew owt of Bradshaws and Hepplestalls, you'll see the rumminess of that."

"Against us for us. Yes, I see. One might almost conclude you like the Hepplestalls, Mr. Bradshaw."

"Like 'em!" said Tom. "Like 'em!" His eyes glanced at William with the suspicion of a twinkle in it. William wondered if there was a twinkle; Sir Philip would not have wondered, he would have seen and he would have understood. He would have discounted Tom's next words, "I take the liberty of telling you the Hepplestalls are a thieving gang of blood-sucking capitalists, but I prefer to stick to the blood-suckers I know. I know the Hepplestalls and I can talk to them. I don't know, I won't talk to a soulless mob of a London syndicate. You can think of it like this, Sir Rupert. There was steam, and it fastened like a vampire on Lancashire. It fastened on your sort as well as on my sort, and we've been working up to where we're getting steam in its place, obeying us, not mastering us. We're doing well against steam. Shorter hours are here, and factory work before breakfast has gone. Half-timers are going, and education's going to get a sporting chance. And we're not beating steam to let ourselves be ruined by water."

William nodded sober acquiescence, but Rupert was uninformed. "Water?" he asked.

"Watered capital," Tom explained. "Lancashire's water-logged, but we'll keep Staithley out of what's coming to Lancashire. You have mills here that are the pride of the county. You wouldn't turn them into the pride of speculators as the biggest grab they ever made in Lancashire! You wouldn't make Staithley suffer from the rot of watered capital."

William stirred furtively on his chair and avoided Tom's eye with the shiftiness of a wrongdoer who is shown the results of misdeed, and then remembered that he had done no wrong and nodded approval of Tom's words which were not addressed to him but to Rupert. Mentally he thanked Tom for saying outright things which he had himself thought. He had merely kept them in reserve, unspoken until he had entertained himself by proceeding a little further with the accountants; but that was, perhaps, not the most honorable form of entertainment, based as it would have been on the false pretense that William was prepared to sell, and he was grateful to Tom for an intrusion which cleared the air. He did not blame himself: he had not played with fire, or, if he had, it had been while wearing asbestos gloves; but what Tom said to Rupert—of course it was to Rupert—was the final argument against a sale, and he drew out notepaper and bent to write.

To Rupert, Tom was simply a nuisance. He had sighted victory, he had carried William, he had resolutely defeated such difficulties as sentiment and the frowning ponderosity of Hepplestell's, and he saw Tom Bradshaw, with his croaking prophecies of after-effects of the sale upon some fifty thousand inhabitants of Staithley, as a monstrous impertinence. He was so busy seeing Tom as

an impertinence that he did not see William writing a letter.

"I've heard of the tyranny of Trade Unions," he said. "I've heard of what they call their rights and what most people call their privileges. But I've never heard of a Trade Union's right to veto a sale. I have the right to transfer possession of my own to anybody. If you think you can engineer a strike against that elementary right of property, I tell you to go ahead and see what happens."

"I know what will happen in this case, Sir Rupert. If we let you sell—"

"You let! You can't prevent."

"If you sold," Tom went on, "some undesirable results would arise. I am dealing with them before they arise. I am dealing on the principle that prevention is better than cure."

"Are you? Then suppose I said strike and be damned to you?"

"If you said that you would be a young man speaking in anger and I shouldn't take you too seriously."

"What!" cried Rupert. There was no doubt about his anger now.

"One moment," said Tom. "I'm against a strike, but it's a good weapon. It's maybe a better weapon when it isn't used than when it is. It can hit the striker as well as the struck."

"Oh? That's dawnd on you, has it?"

"Some time before you were born. But this strike wouldn't hurt the striker. There's somebody ready to buy Hepplestall's. I'll call him Mr. B., because B stands for butcher, and a butcher will buy a bull but he won't buy a mad bull. Mr. B. will think twice before he buys Hepplestall's when Hepplestall's men are on strike against being sold. No one buys trouble with his eyes open."

That's why we can stop this. That's the public way, but I've still great hopes we'll stop it privately, in this room."

"Then you—" Rupert began hotly, but William interrupted. "You may have noticed that I was writing, Mr. Bradshaw. This letter goes to-night finally declining to treat in any way for a sale of Hepplestall's. I have signed it and I am Head of Hepplestall's. I hope, Sir Rupert, the future Head will sign it with me."

"Uncle!" he said, and turned his back.

"It isn't needful," said Tom, "for me to add that nobody shall ever know from me that there was any question of a sale."

"Thank you," said William. "As a fact, Mr. Bradshaw, there never was." He believed what he said, too. He believed he had never been influenced by Gertrude or convinced by Rupert. He believed he had merely toyed pleasantly with the idea, standing himself superior to it. "But that shall not prevent me from appreciating your actions, yours, Lady Hepplestall, and yours, Mr. Bradshaw. We Hepplestalls are all trustees, all of us," he emphasized, looking at Rupert's stiff back, "but you have shown to-day that you are sharer in the trust."

Tom wondered for a moment what was the polite conversational equivalent of ironical cheers; William was escaping too easily, but the chief point was not the regent but the heir, Mary's Rupert, and he could spare William the knowledge that he had deceived nobody.

"Sir Rupert spoke just now," he said, "of the rights of property. They are rightful rights only when they are matched with a sense of responsibility, and capital that forgets responsibility is going to get it in the neck."

"We have," said William superbly, "the idea of service in this firm."

"Man," said Tom, "if you hadn't had, I shouldn't be here to-day talking to you in headlines. If you hadn't

had that idea and if you hadn't lived up to it and if I didn't hope you'd go on living up to it, I'd have had a very different duty. Shall I tell you what that duty would have been, Sir Rupert? To keep my mouth shut and let you sell. The higher you sold the higher they'd resell when they floated their company, and the sooner they'd start squeezing the blood out of Staithley."

Rupert turned a puzzled face. "That would have been your duty? Why?" he asked.

"Hot fevers are short," said Tom. "It 'ud bring the end more quickly. I don't know if you read the *Times*. If you do you may have seen that they mentioned my name the other day along with some more and called us the elder statesmen of the Labor Party. Too old to hurry. Brakes on the wheels of progress. Maybe; but I'm one that looks for other roads than the road that leads to revolution and you Hepplestalls have been a sign-post on a road I like. You've been too busy over-paying yourselves to go far up the road yet, but you're leaders of the cotton trade and by the Lord that ship needs captaincy. That's why I didn't do what lots in the Party would tell me was my duty—to let you rip, and rip another rent in the rotting fabric of capitalism."

Mary's hand was on his arm. "Because you love the Hepplestalls," she said.

"And me a Bradshaw?" he said indignantly. "Me a Labor Member and they capital? Did you ever hear of the two old men who'd been mortal enemies all their lives, and when one of them was killed in a railway accident, the other took to his bed and died because he'd nothing left to live for? That's me and the Hepplestalls."

She shook her head, smiling. "It's not like that," she said.

"It ought to be," said Tom, "but it isn't. Service, not greed, and there's a hope for all of us in that, and if

you want to know who taught me to see it, it was Sir Philip Hepplestall."

Rupert was in distress. Why should London, his schemes, theaters, seem so incredibly remote? Why wasn't he angry with this grizzled fellow from the Staitheley stews who dared, directly and indirectly, to lecture him? Why didn't he resent Mary, another Bradshaw, who had brought Tom there to reprimand a Hepplestall? And why weren't ladders provided for climbing down from high horses?

"My father?" he said. "My father taught you?" It was his ancestors he declined to worship. A father was not an ancestor, and Rupert was hearing again Sir Philip's deep sincerity as he spoke of the Samurai. "We have both learned from Sir Philip, Mr. Bradshaw. I have been near to forgetting the lesson. Did he ever speak to you of Samurai?"

"Sam who?" asked Tom.

"Ah," said Rupert happily. That was his secret, that intimate ideal which Sir Philip had revealed only to his son. He hadn't, perhaps, the soundest evidence for supposing that the confidence had been uniquely to him, but in his present dilemma it seemed entirely satisfactory—a way out and a way down. And, after all, he came down by a ladder.

A great noise filled the room, ear-splitting, nerve-jarring to those who were not used to it. Rupert was not used to it, but for a moment wondered if it were external or the turmoil of his thoughts. "Only the buzzer," William smiled.

"Staitheley goes home," said Tom.

But not yet. The Chief Cashier knocked perfunctorily on the door and came in with the bland air of one who had the entrée at all times. "If Sir Rupert could speak to the workpeople," he said. "Word was passed that

he is here. This window looks upon the yard. May I open it?"

Rupert paused for one of time's minor fractions, and his head jerked as his father's used to jerk. "Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "will you step to the window with us?"

It was grand; it was too grand; it was a gesture which began finely and ran to seed like rhubarb. It was florid when he wanted to be simple and he harked back in mind to a *Punch* cartoon of some years earlier, representing the Yellow Press as a horrible person up to the knee in mud, calling out, "Chuck us another ha'penny and I'll wallow in it." He felt himself up to the midriff in a mud of sentimentality; for two pins, he would with ironic grace wallow in the mud. His surrender was too loathsome and insincere: he held out his hand to Tom, feeling that he was going the whole hog, parading his humiliation before the men and women of Hepplestall's who had the idiotic wish to salute a traitor as their prince.

Tom offered first aid here and shook his head. "No, thanks," he said. "I've to be careful what company I keep in public. I'm Member for Staithley, but I'm Labor Member and you're Capital."

"Aren't we to work together in the future?" asked Rupert.

"If they see me standing there with you, they'll throw brickbats at me, and some of them will hit you. You've a lot to learn, Sir Rupert. Old-fashioned Labor men like me, that want to hurry slowly, are between the devil and the deep sea. If I show myself standing by the devil, the sea will come up and drown me."

"By George," said Rupert, feeling half clean of mud and insincerity, "by George, this is going to be interesting. I've . . . I've a lot to learn, haven't I?"

"Thank God, you know it," said Tom Bradshaw reverently.

And in another minute, Rupert knew it better still, when he moved to the window with William. The factory yard below them was packed with a cheering mass of workpeople, and every inlet to it showed a sea of heads stretching as far as the eye could reach. Not one tenth the employees of the great mills could stand within sight of the window; those who were there had gained priority of place because they worked in the departments nearest the yard, but not by any means all whose work was nearby had come and it struck William, if not Rupert, that the people here assembled were chiefly elderly or very young. The elders, like the gate-keeper who had passed the word of Rupert's coming into the mills, had genuinely an impulse of loyalty to a Hepplestall; the very young were ready to make a noise in a crowd gathered upon any occasion; and the merely young had for the most part made no effort to struggle into the yard.

To Rupert, this was Hepplestall's making spontaneous levy in mass to welcome him; a little absurd of them, even if their prince had been princely, but undeniably affecting. He must play up to these acclamations, he must say something gracious, and he must not condescend. He was an ass whom they lionized, but he wouldn't bray. He offered to speak, and the hearty roar below him diminished.

It has been observed before to-day that the contemptuous noise known as "booing" is unable to assert itself against cheers, whereas a few sharp hisses cut like a whip across any but the greatest uproar. As the cheers diminished in anticipation of his speech, the appearance of unanimity was shattered by derisive hissing, drowned at once by renewed volume of cheers, but more than sufficient to indicate an opposition.

Behind him in the room he heard Mary's quick "What's that?" he heard Tom say "Poor lad! Poor lad!" Who was a poor lad? He? He never did like honey; he

didn't want the leadership of sheep and he began to speak without preamble.

"It's a tremendous thing to be a Hepplestall and if you cheered just now because my name is Hepplestall I think that you were right. Some of you hissed. If that was because I am a Hepplestall, I think that you were wrong, but if it was because I've been a long time in coming here, then you were right. I shirked the responsibility. I had the thought to take my capital out of Hepplestall's and to put it into something soft. But a man said to me lately that capital that failed to accept responsibility was going to get it in the neck. I agreed and my capital stops in something tough, in Hepplestall's. And another thing. We've made hay of the hereditary principle as such. If I've no merit, I shan't presume on being Sir Philip's son. In the mills side by side with you, it will be discovered whether I have merit or no. Now, I am not a socialist. I shall take the wages of capital and if I rise to be your manager, I shall take the wages of management. That's blunt and I expect some of you are taking it as a challenge. Then those are the very fellows who are going to help me most. We'll arrive amongst us at the knowledge of what is capital's fair wage and what is management's fair wage. I am here to learn and I am here to serve. If you will believe that, it will help us all; it will help more than had I kept my motives to myself and simply made you a speech of thanks for the home-coming welcome you have given me. The welcome expressed some disapproval and I should not have been honest if I had pretended that I didn't notice it. I am not out to earn your approval by methods which might be contrary to the interests of Staithley Mills. I am out to serve Hepplestall's, not sectionally, but as a whole. I look to you to show me my way, and while I have to thank you wholeheartedly for your cheers,

I am absolutely sincere in thanking you for your hisses. They are the beginning of my education. I haven't a sweet tooth and I liked them. We're not going to get together easily, I and those fellows who hissed. Well, strong bonds aren't forged easily and I can't be more than a trier. I'm Hepplestall and proud of it, and I dare say that's enough for some of you. It isn't enough for me until I've proved myself and it isn't enough for the fellows who hissed. I'm asking them for fair play for a Hepplestall. I'm asking for a chance. I'm going to do my best and I'm keeping you from home. It's good of you to stay and I've said my say. You've not had butter; you've had facts. My thanks to you for listening. Good night."

They cheered and he stood at the window as they dispersed, trying to remember what he had said, trying to gauge its effect upon the men. There were no hisses, but that meant nothing; a demonstration of opposition had been made and needn't be repeated. But, anyhow, he hadn't lied; he hadn't pretended that he had their esteem before he earned it; and he meant to earn it.

He turned from the window to Tom Bradshaw; neither to Mary nor to William, but to Tom. "Did I talk awful tosh?" he asked. "Honestly, I don't know what I said."

"A young speaker never does, and, some ways, he's the better for having no tricks of the trade. You'll do, lad. You'll do."

Rupert's face was bright as he heard the approbation of a Bradshaw under the portrait of Reuben Hepplestall. "Hepplestall and proud of it! Did I say that?"

William nodded and Rupert looked at him with a puzzled face. "Damn it, it's true," he said wonderingly. "May I sign that letter, Uncle William?"

CHAPTER XI

STAITHLEY EDGE

RUPERT in the office had been all that Mary had dared to hope, and that was the danger of it. She watched him almost distrusting her eyes as she might have watched a sudden conversion at a Salvation Army meeting, as a spectacle that was too fantastic to be accepted at face value. She had an idea that somebody suffered when the penitent reacted from the emotion of the bench.

"Always a catch in everything," she had thought when she avowed her origin to Rupert, though she feared to lose him by the confession, and now she was adventuring again in skepticism, she was hunting the catch, the flaw latent in human happiness. She had won a victory and she expected to pay the price.

William invited them to the Hall and Rupert deferred to her with conventional politeness which seemed to her bleak menace. He froze her by his courtesy after he had so pointedly ignored her presence except for the pained surprise with which he had welcomed her, but she tried to believe that she was hypersensitive.

She had butted in, into an affair of men, and even if he recognized that she had done the one thing possible, she could hardly expect him to applaud her meddling. Men were not grateful to meddling women. Heaven knew she did not want him to eat the leek for her; and often there were understandings which were better left un-

spoken. If that was it, if they were tacitly to agree that her trespass was extreme but justified, then she could do very well without more words. She could exult in his silent approbation; but silent resentment would be terrible.

It would be terrible but bearable: she was thinking too much of herself and too little of him. She loved, and what mattered in love was not what one got out of it but what one put into it. By a treachery, if he liked to take that view of her interference, she had put more into her love than she had ever put before, she had taken a greater risk and he was signally the gainer by it. He was going to Hepplestall's, he was a greater Rupert now.

She couldn't have it both ways and what had been wrong in London was that he had loved her too much, in the sense that he had spent his life upon her and on things which came into his life only through his relationship with her. To be beautiful, love must have proportion and his had grown unshapely. If all her loss were to be loss of superfluity, her price of victory would be low indeed. He would not in Staithley be the great lover he had been in London, but there was double edge to that phrase "great lover": the great lovers were too often the little men. Certainly and healthily he would love her less uxoriously now, and that must be all to the good.

All, even if he loved her no more. That was the risk she had taken with open eyes, and love her sanely or love her not at all, he had come to Hepplestall's: Rupert the man was of more importance than Rupert the husband. And the right man would not cease to love her because she had gone crusading for his soul under the banner of a Bradshaw.

She saw that she had come round to optimism and found herself in such a port with a thousand new alarms. She was crying safety when there was no safety, she . . .

Rupert and William were talking and she had not been

listening. She must have missed clews to Rupert's thought and forced herself to hear. It didn't sound revealing talk, though. Lightly—and how could they be light?—they were chaffing each other about their cars.

"I'll prove it to you now," William was saying. "We'll garage your crock here and I'll drive you up to the Hall in a car that is a car."

"No, thanks," said Rupert, "I've something to do first, with Mary. We'll follow you soon. I dare say my aunt won't be sorry to have warning of our coming."

William's face fell. Gertrude could make herself unpleasant when she did not get her way, and this time her hopes had gone sadly agley. He would have liked a body-guard when he announced to her that Rupert was coming to Staithley. "I had hoped—" he began.

Rupert nodded curtly. "Yes," he said, surprising William by a look which seemed strangely to comprehend his dilemma, "but we shall not be long."

Mary thrilled through all preoccupation to the heady thought that a Bradshaw was to dine at Staithley Hall, but her way there was not, it seemed, to be an easy one. Rupert chose, she supposed, to have things out with her first, and if she did not relish the anticipation, she could admire his promptitude. He had an air of grim gayety which mystified by its contradiction, but of which the grimness seemed addressed to William and the gayety to her.

"Got any luggage?" he asked her. She had quitted Staithley with a suitcase; she returned with no more outward show of possession, and they picked up her case in the ante-room where she had left it as they passed through to get the car.

"Well, Mary Ellen," he said, using her full name which certainly was normal in Lancashire where the Mary Ellens and the John Thomases are almost double-barreled

names, "this is Staithley. How well do you remember it? Is there a road round the mills?"

"I think so," she said, "but you'll meet cobbles."

"It's Staithley," he said, and drove the circuit of the mills in silence. "Um," he said. "London. Furthest East, which is the Aldwych Theater, to Furthest West, which is the St. James, to Furthest North, which is the Oxford, and back East by Drury Lane. We've driven further than that round these mills. Somebody once mentioned to me that they're big. There's a coal mine, too, that's a bit of detail nobody bothers to think of. Well, is there any way of looking down on this village?"

"There's Staithley Edge," she said. "There's a road up by the Drill Hall."

"Point it out," he said. "You understand that we're doing this to give Aunt Gertrude time to powder her nose. It isn't really a waste of petrol."

Whatever it was, and certainly she found no harsh reactions here, they were doing it in the dark which fell like a benediction on Staithley. Their wheels churned up rich mud of the consistency, since for days it had been fine, of suet pudding, and the road, worn by the heavy traffic of the mills, bumped them inexorably. "Staithley!" he said. "Staithley!" but she did not detect contempt. They reached the Drill Hall and the Square, unchanged except by a War Memorial and a cinema, and turned into the street up which she had once gazed while Mr. Chown waited, ill-lighted, ill-paved, a somber channel between two scrubby rows of deadly uniform houses. "Staithley goes home," Tom Bradshaw had said, and this was where an appreciable percentage of it had gone; but neither Rupert nor Mary were being sociological now. She did not know what he was thinking; she thought of Staithley Edge and of the moors beyond, wondering a little why she should

find Staithley so good when it was so good to get out of it up here.

A tang of burning peat assailed her nostrils, indicating that they had reached the height where peat from the moors cost less than coal from the pits, and soon the upland air blew coolly in their faces as they left the top-most house behind. The road led on, over the hill, across the moor which showed no signs, in the darkness, of men's ravaging handiwork, but at the first rise Rupert stopped the car and got out.

"So that's it." He looked on Staithley, where the streets, outlined by their lamps, seemed to lead resolutely to an end which was nothing. It was not nothing; it was the vast bulk of Staithley Mills, unlighted save for a glimmer here and there, but possibly he was seeing in these human roadways which debouched on that black in-human nullity, a symbol of futility. The gayety seemed gone from him like air from a punctured balloon, as he said again, in a dejected voice, "So that's it. That pool of darkness. They're a great size, the Staithley Mills."

She was out of the car and at his elbow as she said, "A man's size in jobs, Rupert."

"Or in prisons," he said bitterly.

"Prisons!" And she had been feeling so secure! Here was sheer miracle—she and Rupert were standing together on Staithley Edge; they were in her land of heart's desire, and the Edge, her Mecca, was betraying her, the miracle was declining to be miraculous. "Prisons!" she said, in an agony of disillusionment.

"Oh, aren't we all in prison?" he asked. "The larger, the smaller—does it matter?"

This was philosophy, and Mary wanted the practicalities. "Are you seeing me as jailer? Is that what you mean?"

"Resenting you?" he asked. "You?" and left it so with luminous emphasis. "No. Life's the jailer. For four years I was every day afraid of death. I'm afraid of life to-night. What shall I make of Staithley? Those mills, to which each Hepplestall since the first who built there has added something great. Those milestones of my race. I meant to run away, I meant to dodge and shirk and make belief. You've steered me back and I thank you for it, Mary. But it's a mouthful that I've bitten off. Hepplestall's! What shall I add? I don't know. I'm overpowered. It's so solemn. It's so big."

"You're big, Rupert."

He seemed not to hear or to feel her hand on his. "On me, ultimately on me alone rests the responsibility." That is what my father, who was Head of Hepplestall's, said to me. Look at those mills, then look at me. They're big. They're terrifying in their bigness."

"No. Worth while in their bigness."

"I don't know what you were thinking as we drove round the mills. I was wondering," he smiled a little, "if they speak of a cliff as beetling because it makes one feel the size of a beetle under it. And I thought of a machine I remembered seeing in the works that they call a beetle. It's got great rollers with weights that clump and thump the cloth till it shines and the noise of it splits your ears. Each huge wall of the mills, God knows how many stories high, seemed to fall on me like so many successive blows from a beetling machine. I was under Hepplestall's, as people talk of being under the weather, and it's always Hepplestall's weather in Staithley. I wasn't lying when I spoke to those fellows in the yard, I had some confidence then, but it's oozed, it's oozed. Look at the size of it all."

"I'm looking," said Mary, "and from Staithley Edge it's in perspective. Rupert, this air up here! I'm not afraid. Not here. Not now. You . . . you've got

growing pains, and they say they're imaginary, but I know they're good. You're a bigger man already than you were."

"I'm a hefty brute for a growing child," he smiled down at her.

"You can take it smiling, though," she approved.

"It's this modern flippancy," he grinned. "A generation of scoffers. But you can't get over Hepplestall's by scoffing at it. I came up here to look down on it, and I'm only more aware than ever that it's big. You—you've got your idea of me. It's a nice idea, but it's pure flattery."

"No."

"Oh, yes, it is, to-day. But it's something to grow up to, and it's worth while because it's your idea. If this family gang of mine told me they believed in me I should know they were talking through their hats. They wouldn't be believing in me, they'd be believing in who I am, they'd be believing in a tradition which declares that my father's son must be up to standard. You're different. You know me and they don't, and you've brought me to Staithley. It's your doing, and I want like hell not to let you down. Your idea of me's not true. It's too good to be true. But I mean to make it true."

Mary looked uphill to where, a hundred feet above them, the darkling rim of the Edge was silhouetted against the sky. "Staithley Edge," she said, "and in my mind I was calling you a cheat." She stooped to the bank by the road, she plucked coarse grass and held it to her lips. "Staithley Edge, will you forgive me? The dreams I've had of you, and then the shameful doubts and now the better than all dreaming that this is. I was going to build a house on Staithley Edge, and I have built a man."

"Of course," said Rupert, "I knew you had a passion for hills."

"I never told you," Mary said.

"No. But I knew. This is a hill. It isn't an Alp. It isn't a mountain. It's Staithley Edge. I wonder what they're doing about houses in Staithley. I don't want to rob any one, but I'd like a house up here."

"Rupert!" she cried.

"It's Aunt Gertrude, you know," he seemed to apologize. "Poor old thing, she's got the same bee in her bonnet that her nephew used to have. London. Well, William's the Head and he ought to go on at the Hall, and if he does it should pacify Gertrude. I expect he's going through it while we're loafing up here. Shall we go and break the news to her that there's no eviction on the program?"

"Oh, my dear, there are a thousand things we haven't said."

"There's the point, for instance, that if I look down on Staithley Mills every morning from my bedroom I ought to feel less scared of them."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Mary and, kissing him, some hundreds of the things they hadn't said seemed lustrously expressed. She found no insincerities in him now; the gesture and the bravado and the air that it was all something he was doing for a wager—these had gone and in their place was his task acknowledged and approached with humility. It was a beginning and she thought so well of his beginning that she had time to think of herself.

He turned the car towards the Hall, and the thought that she was going there was no longer heady. He had spoken contemptuously of "this family gang"; he had said, and she adored him for it, that she was different. They had, perhaps, some comfort for Gertrude; they were going to her with a message which should reconcile her to the news she would have heard from William; but, for

all that, Mary was daunted at her coming encounter with Gertrude Hepplestall.

"Rupert," she said, "you must help me to-night. Your aunt, and all the Hepplestalls, your family—and me."

He frowned. "Well?" he said.

"There's the tradition, and you married me. You married into musical comedy."

"Hasn't it dawned on you that you're my wife, Mary?" But that was precisely what had dawned upon her and his question made her wonder if he saw what was implied. In London, he was all but explicitly the husband of Mary Arden; in Staithley she was no longer Mary Arden, she was the wife of Sir Rupert Hepplestall. That might not mean that the foundations of their relationship had shifted, but it certainly meant a vital difference in its values above the surface. She was Cæsar's wife and people ought not to be able to remember against Cæsar that he had married an actress.

"Yes, your wife, Rupert. Your wife who was an actress."

"Are you making the suggestion that you are something to be ashamed of?"

"I've the conceit to believe I'm not. You love me and I've the right to be conceited. But it isn't what I think of myself, it's what Staithley will think of me. London's inured to actresses. Staithley—"

"Excuse an interruption," he said, "but if you want to know what Staithley will think to-morrow, look there." He slowed the car and pointed to the cinema across the Square. A man on a ladder was hand-printing in large letters on a white sheet above the door "Tomorrow. Mary Arden in . . ."

"That's enterprise, isn't it? The fellow can't have heard more than half an hour ago that I was here, then he'd to think of you and he must have been busy on the

'phone to have made sure of getting that film here to-morrow."

"Rupert, how awful for you. They will never forget what I was now."

"Never. Thank God."

"Don't you care?"

"Oh, yes, I care and if I cared cheaply, I should thank you for being my propagandist. I should thank you for making me popular because you are popular and I'm your husband. You can't deny there's that in it, Mary, but there's more. There's the bridging of a gulf. There's a breach made in a bad tradition. We Hepplestalls must drop being Olympian. Aloofness; that's to go and it'll get a shove when Lady Hepplestall is seen on the screen in Staithley. What do a thousand Gertrudes matter if we can bridge the gulf? We've got to get together, we've got to reach those men who hissed. Do you see that cinema as a cheap way? I don't. It's a modern way if you like and it isn't a way I made but one you made for me. It's a reach-me-down, and I shan't stop at ways that are ready-made. I'll find my own. Up on the Edge I asked what I would add to Hepplestall's. I'll add this if I can—I'll add humanity."

"And I can help. Music, for instance."

"You'll make me jealous soon. You have so many advantages of me. I'm not even sure if I'm good enough for Lancashire League cricket. It's good stuff, I can tell you. Whereas you . . ."

"Am I to manage Staithley Mills?"

"Nor I, for years. Never, if I'm unequal to it. But you're right. The mills are the important thing, the rest's decoration and decoration won't go far. Staithley won't stand you and me as Lady and Lord Bountiful. Those hissing friends of ours—circuses won't satisfy them and I'd think the worse of them if they would. I'll talk

to William to-night and I expect he'll snap my head off. He's of the old gang, William is. There's the war between William and me, but, Lord, he'll know, he'll know it all and I know nothing. I'm so young."

"Yes," said Mary, "and you'll stay young, please. You'll keep your hope, my faith, your youth."

"I'm young all right," he said. "Listen to me if you doubt it. 'I'll add humanity.' Did I say that? With a voice beautifully vibrant with earnestness? Young enough to be capable of anything. But I will add it," he finished as he drew up at the door of the Hall.

Hope burnished them as they came into the old home of the Hepplestalls; they were the keepers of a great light lit on Staithley Edge; they had a radiance which seemed to Gertrude a personal affront to her chatelainship. They came with the insolence of conquerors into the somber scene of her defeat, but she was on guard against revealing her feelings to the actress woman who was Lady Hepple stall. She had failed, she was doomed to Staithley, she had to explain away to her friend the letter she had written announcing that she was coming to live in London, she was to be evicted from the Hall by a saucy baggage out of a musical comedy; but even if the baggage proved as bad as her worst anticipations she would not lower to her by the fraction of an inch her flag of resolutely suave politeness.

She went upstairs to change her face after a tempestuous interview with William, and, expectant of a Mary strident in jazz coloring, changed also her frock to a sedate gray which should contrast the lady with the Lady. Then Mary came, with hair wind-tossed, and round her lips were marks as if she were a child sticky with toffee (but that was because when you pluck grass on Staithley Edge and press it to your cheek and kiss it, it leaves behind traces of the smoky livery it wears), apologizing for

her plain traveling dress, looking so unlike Gertrude's idea of the beauty-chorus queen who had captured Rupert that immediately she was off on a new trail and saw in Mary a tool made for her through which to work on Rupert and after all to bring about the sale of Hepple-stall's. She could manage this smudge-faced piece of insignificance and she could manage a Rupert who had been caught by it. Her spirits rose, and their happiness seemed to her no longer offensive but imbecile.

Later on, she wondered why she forgot that the business of an actress was to act. She meditated ruefully upon the vanity of human hopes and the fallibility of first impressions, and she had no doubt but that Mary, for some dark purpose of her own, had counterfeited insignificance.

Mary hadn't, as a fact, acted, but she had thought of Mary Ellen Bradshaw and of Jackman's Buildings and Staithley streets as the door of the Hall opened to her, and she had continued to think of Mary Ellen Bradshaw through the few moments when Gertrude was greeting her. She didn't know that the mourning grass of Staithley Edge had left its mark on her face; if she had known, she would have felt more insignificant still, but she had washed since then, she had kissed Rupert in their bedroom in Staithley Hall and her effect now upon Gertrude was that of the bottle marked "Drink me" upon Alice in Wonderland. Gertrude had drunk of no magic bottle, but she dwindled before Mary. It was disconcerting to an intriguer who had so lately seen Mary as her pliant instrument, but "Pooh! some actress trick," she thought, making an effort to believe that she dominated the table.

"I'm afraid you will find Staithley very dull," she said, "but we shall all do our best for you."

"Thank you," said Mary. "It's exciting so far."

"Yes. It must be strangely novel to you. Of course,

I never go into the town. One needn't, living in the Hall; but I'm forgetting. I shan't be living here."

"Oh, you will, aunt," said Rupert. "We went up on the Edge to have a look at it all, and we decided—it arose out of a suggestion of Mary's—to build a house up there. You see, uncle, you're the Head. The Hall is naturally yours and aunt's."

"Naturally? It's your property, Rupert?"

"Then that settles it. We'll get some one to run us up a cottage on the Edge quite quickly. Really a cottage, I mean. I shall be working as a workman and I ought to live as one. I shan't do that, but it won't be a mansion pretending to be a cottage."

"Well!" said Gertrude. "A cottage on the Edge!"

"We have to grow, Rupert and I," said Mary. "We aren't big enough for the Hall yet."

"I feel about a quarter of an inch high, uncle, when I think of those mills . . . those thousands of men."

"Oh, the workpeople," said Gertrude, putting them in their place. "Your uncle tells me some of them dared to hiss."

"Yes, I want to talk to you about that, uncle."

William shuffled in his chair. "Not very nice of them, was it?"

"Impertinents," said Gertrude. "They ought to be locked up."

Rupert stared at her. If this was the attitude of the Hall, he thought, no wonder there had been a show of resentment. But it was only Gertrude's attitude. "Would you also lock up," said William, "the very many who did a deadlier thing than hissing? The men who stayed away, the men who went home ignoring Rupert altogether? We'd have to close the mills for lack of labor."

"Lord," said Rupert, "that's telling me something."

"I thought it best that you should know."

Rupert thought so too, even if it was a piece of knowledge which seemed to bring him off a high place with a bump.

"Oh, my dears," Gertrude put in, "you've no idea how difficult it all is."

"No," said Mary, "but Rupert knows that he knows nothing and he's here to learn."

"Yes. I'm here to learn. Can you put your finger on this for me, uncle? Why did they hiss? Why did they stay away?"

"What do you expect from a pig but a grunt?" asked Gertrude.

"It's to be noted, Rupert," said William, "that the hisses came before you spoke, not afterwards."

"You mean I said the right thing?"

"Did you mean what you said? Look at those books over there." Behind the glass of the old mahogany case to which he pointed, the titles looked queerly incongruous. There were books on such subjects as Welfare Societies, Works Committees, Co-Partnership, and Rupert thought them incongruous not only in connection with that book-case but with William.

"People have sent them to you?" he guessed.

"No. I bought them. If in the short years that I've been Head I have left my mark on Hepplestell's, it is in this direction. Your father, as perhaps you know, was against what he called coddling the men. I would not coddle, but I have encouraged Welfare Societies and I have instituted Works Committees."

Rupert had the sensation of deflation. He had called William of "the old gang," and here was William's contribution to the march of Hepplestell's. Rupert was to add humanity, was he? Well, William had added it first. "I did these things with hope," William was saying. "I

pinned my faith to them, and what are they worth? There were two Hepplestalls hissed in Staithley Mills to-day. That is the reply to what I have tried to do. Can you wonder that I feel I've shot my bolt and missed my aim? The detail of my Works Committees scheme took me a year to evolve. I thought it was accepted and welcomed; and I was hissed to-day in Staithley Mills."

For a moment even Mary was daunted, not by the thing she had brought Rupert here to do but by the realization of what release had meant to William.

"Not you, uncle," Rupert cried. "They hissed me for being a laggard."

"We're Hepplestalls. That's why they hissed. They hissed the Service."

It had seemed solemn enough on Staithley Edge, but that was childish levity compared with this. What should one answer back to men who hissed the Service which served them? Gertrude's pig with a grunt seemed justified in the light of William's revelation of his progressive efforts.

"And you," William said, "you spoke, and they cheered you for it. Well, it's in those books. Co-Partnership. No: I've not done that. Limitation of profits—I've thought the Government was doing that drastically. I don't know. You went too far for me, but they didn't hiss you when you'd done. You say you're here to learn. Well, I can't teach you. The technical side and the ordinary business side—oh, yes, we'll teach you those. But what Labor wants, what, short of something catastrophic on the Russian scale, will satisfy Labor, I cannot tell you for I do not know."

Once, unimaginably long ago, Rupert had found the beginnings of a solution in his wife's appearance on the screen in a Staithley cinema. It was so long ago that he thought he must have grown stupendously since then.

Perhaps he had; it was a far cry from that uninformed optimism to this throttling doubt.

The doubt, though, was almost as uninformed as the optimism. He could see Mary's lips moving: what was she signaling to him? Ah, that was it. She was repeating what she had said as they turned up the drive. "You'll stay young, please. You'll keep your hope, my faith, your youth."

Yes, so he would. He wouldn't let Mary down, he wouldn't be beaten by Staithley. *Punch*—queer how much he turned to memories of *Punch* for mental figures—had a cartoon in an *Almanac* during the war. A tattered soldier, beaten to the knee, represented one year; a fresh upstanding soldier, taking the standard from the first, represented the next year. Was the motto "Carry on"? Well, a good motto for peace too. William was coming to the end of his tether, and Rupert must make ready to take from his hands the standard of the Service.

He had to learn, to learn, and for this thing which mattered most he had not found a teacher, but he must keep his hope. Somewhere was light. Somewhere was illumination. Somewhere was a teacher.

A servant came into the room. "Mr. Bradshaw wishes to speak to Sir Rupert on the telephone," he said, and a scoffing laugh from Gertrude died stillborn at a look from the ci-devant, insignificant Lady Hepplestall. Rupert went to the door, like a blind man who is promised sight; and it is permissible to hope that Phoebe Bradshaw, from the place in which she was, saw the face of Rupert Hepplestall as he answered the call to the telephone of Tom Bradshaw, his adviser.



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